BROKEN LINKS.

A LOVE STORY.

BY

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BROKEN LINKS.

CHAPTER I.

PARTING.

THE pretty little town of Langford, in that highly favored county Southshire, was considered by its inhabitants as quite equal to London in cultivation, enlightenment, and social advantages. It stood on the slope of a low range of hills, and enjoyed a pleasant lookout over a richly variegated plain on one side and the thickly wooded irregularity of the uplands on the other. A number of gentlemen's seats studded the surrounding country, none of them so grand as to be inaccessible to the smaller gentilities of the town, while the social bonds between them were drawn all the closer because several of the younger and more impecunious members of the county families condescended to manage the Langford banking, legal, and medical matters, and deigned to make money in what would once have been considered a somewhat derogatory fashion.

Rents were low in Langford, so was the death rate; and excellent sport was to be found in its neighborhood. It was a little more than four hours from London, added to which a famous crammer had established

himself there, and many strangers were attracted to so desirable a locality. Pretty villas of various dimensions, from the handsome Elizabethan house surrounded by pretentious grounds to small Queen Anne structures with neat gardens back and front, and older-fashioned thatched cottage-ornéd abodes, covered with roses and clematis almost touching the roof, and furnished with grassplots and a flower border behind, grew up in its vicinity.

Of these, none were more neatly kept than Navarino Cottage, the residence of Commander, or, as he was usually called, Captain Josiah Rowley, R. N.

It was his own property. He had purchased it on his retirement from active service some fifteen or sixteen years before, when prices at Langford were considerably lower than at the date of this true tale. Here he established himself—a widower with a little fair-haired girl and a lanky boy of twelve or thirteen.

One of his chief attractions to Langford was the society of the vicar and his wife, friends of early days, with whose children his daughter grew up, sharing their play and their lessons, taking her turn in driving their village cart, and in riding the shaggy animal that drew it.

Captain Rowley was a man of good family, but from a different part of the country, and, though a stranger, he was well received by the Langfordians generally. He was well bred, in a bluff, sailorlike fashion, and a fairly good shot, while his political views were of the true blue order, which were exceedingly acceptable to the majority of his neighbors. Moreover he had that air of sturdy independence with high and low which

almost always finds favor with Englishmen, however the possessor may suffer from lack of gold.

Of filthy lucre Captain Rowley had but little—though no one ever heard him complain. He was a strict economist, and an equally strict disciplinarian—at least as regarded his son; his daughter—well, this story will show how he managed her.

It was a glorious autumnal day, the fitting end of an unusually fine summer, about five o'clock in the afternoon, when Captain Rowley returned slowly from his nearly diurnal visit to the club (another of Langford's advantages) toward home. Navarino Cottage, as everyone who has lived at Langford knows, was situated in Oak Tree Lane, just beyond the turn from the high road to Westerton, which here made a short, steep descent; consequently the windows in front of that snug little dwelling commanded a wide view over the plain below, now yellow with golden grain ready for the sickle, interspersed with spaces of rich green pasture land. Overhead a few fleecy white clouds moved slowly across the bright blue sky, while the sleepy hum of insects was occasionally broken by the tinkle of a sheep bell from a flock browsing on a piece of common which stretched downhill at the other side of the lane.

One of the oak trees from which it took its name grew at the north end of the cottage, sheltering with its wide-spread branches the narrow strip of pleasure ground, which intervened between a low wooden paling and the house, and which the owner kept in a high state of neatness and greenness.

It was very warm, and had been a breathless day.

Captain Rowley paused on reaching his own little domain, lifted his straw hat and wiped his brows—looking all the time keenly at the shrubs and flowers within the paling, as if seeking for some tokens of neglect. Then he opened the gate, and walked up a side path which led past the end of the house to a second wicket; so, passing through a small yard into which the kitchen opened, and where some fowls scratched and clucked behind a wire netting, he entered the house by the back door, passing the kitchen, into which he looked with a frown, and entered the drawing room. Though low, it was of fair size, with two windows commanding a view over the country below. The furniture was old-fashioned and plain, but a couple of dwarf bookcases, well filled, and plenty of ordinary flowers, gave it a homelike aspect. The room was not untenanted. On a sofa near the fireplace, now masked by ferns, a young lady half-sat, half-lay, resting on her right elbow, reading a rather ponderous book, which was propped up against the sofa cushion, while one foot hung a little below the seat, a very neat foot and ankle showing beneath her fresh blue-and-white cotton frock. A large, shady brown hat lay on the floor near her, with a pair of wash-leather gloves tossed into the crown.

She was so intent on her book that (the door being open) she did not hear her father's approach until he said, in a rather indignant tone:

"Janet!"

She started from her semi-recumbent position to her feet, and stood upright—a tall, slight, but rounded figure, surmounted by a well set-on head, amply sup-

plied with light brown, gently waved hair—gazing at him with a slightly puzzled expression in her large, well-shaped gray eyes, from under lashes and brows a shade or two darker than her hair.

"What are you wasting your time lounging there for?" he demanded; "have you nothing to do but to read novels all day?"

"It's not a novel, but almost as fascinating—at least all the parts I don't skip are," she returned, a very sunny smile parting her lips. "Have you ever read it, dear dad? It is by Gardiner Wilkinson—all about ancient Egypt, with lots of pictures—you can't think how wonderful."

"I should like to know what good these out-of-the-way useless books can do you," interrupted Captain Rowley. "It would be a great deal better and more improving if you went into the kitchen and saw to the preparation of dinner. Pray, do you know that the kitchen door is wide open, and not a sign of Barbara to be seen?"

"Oh, yes," stooping to pick up her hat and gloves; "she asked leave to go and see her mother, who has a sore throat. That is the reason I stayed in, to take care of the house—but she ought not to have left the door open."

"Great care, indeed—when you were so lost in that nonsensical book that you never heard me come in."

"Yes, that was rather stupid of me; but then, you know, there are no thieves or burglars in Langford," she returned, watching his face, half smiling, half concerned.

"The fact is you can never manage that girl—nor any girl."

"Perhaps; but what I *can* manage is to kiss *you*," and she suddenly threw her arms round his neck. In truth she was very nearly as tall as the old sailor, who was neither dignified nor good-looking, having a breadth of shoulder disproportioned to his height, a large, bony, weather-beaten face, and thin red hair now toning down to gray, not to omit somewhat fiery, steely blue eyes, into which a kindly expression stole as he yielded to his daughter's embrace with affected reluctance.

"Oh, yes, that's all very well; but duty before laziness and self-indulgence."

"Of course, dad. I assure you I have done heaps of things this morning, and you are to have a nice roast chicken—and—and peas."

"You don't know what I am to have. I ordered dinner at half-past eight this morning myself, and I should not be surprised if the peas are lying still unshelled in the basket, though I gathered them myself this morning at——"

"At six—or was it half-past five?" put in Janet.

"Early enough, anyhow. They ought to be ready now."

"I will go and see to them at once," cried Janet, shutting up her book with an air of decision, and betaking herself, hat and all, to the cheery little kitchen.

Here she soon found the peas still unshelled in their basket, and placing them on the kitchen table sat down with another basket at her feet, and a nice white basin in her lap, quite in a businesslike manner, as Captain

Rowley observed when he looked in a few minutes after.

"Well, as you are not afraid of burglars, I will just go as far as the Grange, they have some capital red-nosed kidneys there; I should like to try some in our potato patch, for I can't say this year's crop is as successful as I should wish."

"Very well; and, dad, if you meet Maurice tell him I am busy, so there is no use in his coming up here. He wanted me to walk with him this evening."

"Oh, he did, did he?"

"Yes; you know it is his last week in England."

"I do; and high time for him to be doing something for himself. How many times was he plucked?"

"Not oftener than many other people," said Janet, but she did not say it saucily, rather sadly.

"I am sure the vicar ought to be thankful to get rid of one more of his numerous brood. Remember, my dear, if that jade Barbara is five minutes late she shall go. What time did you tell her she must be in?"

"I did not tell her any time; she said she would be back in time to cook the dinner, and I was then so deep in a delightful bit about the domestic habits of the ancient Egyptians that I just said 'very well.'"

Captain Rowley groaned.

"I must wait for my dinner, I foresee. Don't let her hurry and spoil everything," and Captain Rowley nodded to his daughter as he went out, his footsteps soon ceasing to sound as he left the crisp gravel of the garden for the road.

Janet shelled her peas diligently, earnestly hoping that Barbara would soon return, as she did not feel her-

self competent even to boil peas undirected. "I really must learn how to cook," she thought. "It cannot be so difficult, or Barbara would not get on as well as she does, with only a cookery book and her mother coming to teach her every now and then. I am terribly weak and self-indulgent. How often I have determined to stay in the kitchen and see how things are done, and then I go off to something else. Of course, I cannot give up these lovely summer days to such tiresome work, but in the winter I shall get Mrs. Hopkins to give me some lessons."

Here her reflections were disturbed by the sound of a step in the hall—a quick, firm step. It paused, and then a man's voice called "Janet!"

"I am here—in the kitchen," she replied, the color deepening in her cheek and an amused look coming into her eyes.

In another moment a young man entered, with an air of being quite at home, taking off his hat as he crossed the threshold. He was a good-looking youngster about Janet's own age, possibly younger, of middle height, with aquiline features, dark auburn hair, a remarkably fine pair of brown eyes, and incipient mustaches that did not as yet hide his pleasant smile.

"Is this the important business your father told me prevented your coming out?" he exclaimed, putting down his hat and drawing a chair opposite to her.

"Yes."

"And it is such a lovely day, Janet."

"I know it is, and it is a horrid nuisance being obliged to stay in; but I must not go out till Barbara returns. My father wants his dinner at six, you know.

Maurice, do you know if peas ought to be put down to boil in hot water or cold?"

"No; haven't an idea. I should fancy in hot water; they'll be done all the quicker."

Janet shook her head.

"There must be some first principles even in boiling peas, which neither you nor I know."

"Well, look here, Janet. Can't you come for a stroll later, when the moon is up? It will be just heavenly in Ravensbrook Woods to-night. Come up to the vicarage to supper, and we can take a turn on the way back."

"I might manage that, for dad wants to write to Tom this evening."

"Thank you!" There was a pause, during which Janet looked thoughtfully at the peas and Maurice Winyard gazed at her.

"I suppose I shall be on the high seas this day week," he said at length.

"I suppose so—you lucky boy!"

"Yes! I am glad in some ways. But Janet, it is an awful wrench saying good-by to—to you," and he bent forward nearer to her.

"You will be sorry to leave us, Maurice, but you will be all right in a few weeks, and as gay as a lark."

"Do you think me a heartless fellow then?"

"No. You have quite as much heart as is good for you. The world would come to a standstill if men were always hankering after their homes."

"Do you know, Janet, I sometimes doubt if you have any heart yourself?" he returned, with a touch of pain in his voice.

"Ah! so do I," exclaimed Janet seriously. "I am awfully puzzled about myself. Sometimes I am afraid I am only good-natured on the surface, but hard and selfish in the depths below."

"Puzzling! Yes, you are puzzling, with a vengeance; yet the sweetest, dearest girl *I* ever knew."

"Thank you!" looking up with a smile that justified the term sweet. "But you haven't seen many."

"How do you know? I have been very little at home for the last two years," in an offended tone.

"You are so used to me, Maurice."

"That is the most trying thing of all. One can so easily get too used to a person. But—Janet, do you remember the Christmas before last when I kissed you under the mistletoe at Mervyn Hall?"

"I do," she returned, taking up another pod and keeping her eyes on it. "It was a delightful evening."

"Ah, Janet! I have never felt the same toward you since. Do you know I suddenly wanted to kiss you ever since."

"Oh, nonsense, Maurice! It is not polite to talk in that—that childish way."

"It is anything but childish," he exclaimed. "Listen to me, Janet. I am awfully fond of you. I never can love any woman as I love you, and now that I really have made a start in life, don't you think"— a short embarrassed pause, during which he picked up one of the shells and began nervously to extract the peas— "don't you think you could care enough for me to wait till I came back? If you would only promise to be my wife."

"Now, Maurice, it would be the very unkindest thing

I could do. You are ever so much too young to think of a long engagement. I should just be a millstone round your neck. You have your own career—oh, how delightful it would be to be a man and have a career—and then there's your mother and the girls. You are the eldest son, you know, and when the vicar is quite old they will look to you to take care of them."

"Well, Janet, you would be the one to help me in doing that," he continued, trying to take her hand.

"No; don't, Maurice; they are not fit to touch after these peas. Then there's another thing. I am not going to fall in love with anyone—that I am *quite* determined!"

"Why, Janet, you are the very girl to fall desperately in love. You have been always in love with someone—you were very bad about Robert Bruce—and you had a tremendous turn about Garibaldi; and even that high and mighty Palliser of Mervyn Hall, you talked of nothing else when his unfortunate wife was burned to death in that hotel fire last year."

"But, Maurice, everyone was talking of him. All this is just imagination! Now that I am older and wiser I am *quite* determined not to fall in love. Look at Helen Verner; how changed and miserable she is since she was engaged two or three years ago—and your own sister since she married Mr. Robinson—and oh, many others!"

"Then do you intend to be an old maid?"

"No—I am not sure. I shall be probably, for I have no money. If I marry a nice kind man I can be very fond of him without being in love."

"You are horribly worldly, Janet!" exclaimed Maurice, trying to pull his growing mustache.

"Perhaps I am, Maurice," thoughtfully, "at all events, I will never marry a poor man—never. I don't mind being poor with my father—dear old dad. He can't help being hard-up, and though he storms at me now and then he'd give me his life if it could do me any good. I don't care for finery, but I *do* like ease, and pretty things, and to travel—and oh! I should like to ride. Then, to feel one's self a burden on a poor man! Oh! it would be intolerable. Dear, dear Maurice, don't trouble about *me!* Put me out of your head and enjoy yourself. It is a grand thing to feel that the world is before you and that you have a good start."

"I can't understand you, Janet, but I see you do not care for me *now*. I don't believe I shall ever love any girl as I love you."

"Oh, yes; you will love a dozen. You are ever so much too young to think of marrying, or engaging yourself. If *I* were a man I would not marry till I was ever so old."

"But I suppose you don't think *yourself* too young to marry now?"

"No; I am really older than you."

"Nonsense! Why, Janet, *I* am six months your senior."

"Years don't count. A woman of nineteen is older than a boy at twenty."

"Let us discuss that by moonlight to-night. You will walk with me all the same, eh, Janet?"

"I will," putting the white bowl, now more than

half full beside the basket on the table, "for, O Maurice, I am awfully sorry to lose you. So is your mother," she added hastily.

"The poor mother will not see much more of me," he returned, with a sigh, "and she will feel it awfully."

There was a silence; then Maurice, putting his elbow on the table, leaned forward toward his companion till he almost touched her, when his elbow slipped and knocked over the bowl which stood perilously near the edge of the table, and all the peas were scattered over the kitchen floor.

"Oh, you awkward boy," cried Janet; "what shall I do? Dad will be furious if he has no peas, and I hardly like to gather any more unknown to him."

"I am awfully sorry," exclaimed Maurice, profoundly penitent, "can't we gather them up?"

"Yes," said Janet, with sudden determination, "we must." She jumped up, ran to a cupboard in the wall, and returned with a dustpan and brush. "Just sweep them up, Maurice; then I will put them in the colander and pour water over them—they will not be any the worse."

This had hardly been accomplished when the truant Barbara returned. She was greeted effusively, and left in possession of the kitchen.

"It is too late for a walk now, I am afraid, Janet," said Maurice; "besides, I would rather have a moonlight walk—wouldn't you?"

"Yes, but I am not sure whether I ought to go," returned Janet reflectively. "Suppose we take Mary, too?"

"I did not think you would be so unkind, Janet. Why, it will be our last walk together for many a year, though I don't suppose *you* care about that?"

"I do, Maurice—more than—than you think," she returned, with unexpected tenderness. "I will be sure to come up to supper."

Her young lover caught and kissed her hand.

"Ah, Janet, you do care about me a little?"

"Enough to make me long for your success, and that you should become General Sir Maurice Winyard without losing either legs or arms on the way."

"If I write, will you answer my letters?"

"Yes, Maurice, certainly. I love writing letters and receiving letters."

"No matter who writes to you?"

"It quite depends on who writes them," said she, with dignity.

"How I shall look forward to yours!" began Maurice, when the click of the garden gate closing warned them of approaching interruption, and in another minute or two Captain Rowley came in.

"Hallo, Maurice, I have just met your mother, and they were going to tea with Mrs. Hastings, and begged you would not be late; half the old women in the place are assembled to bid you good-by; and, Janet, Mrs. Winyard wants you to go up to supper. I am going to write this evening, so I shall not want my hit at backgammon."

"Very well, dad."

"I will see her home," put in Maurice.

"All right, my boy. You'll soon be escorting the belles of Bombay in their morning rides. Ah, it's a

grand thing to be at the starting point of the race. Be off now; don't keep your mother waiting."

Maurice caught up his hat, and waving adieu to father and daughter walked quickly away down the gravel path, and disappeared through the gate.

Captain Rowley sat down and wiped his brow.

"Whew! It is an exhausting day, and I am growing old. I find working in the garden knocks me up as it used not. Fetch me my book from the dining room; my specs are shut up in it."

Janet instantly obeyed.

"Dear dad!" she exclaimed, kissing his brow as she gave him his book. "You are as young as ever."

"None of your nonsense, you deluding monkey. Has that bagagge, Barbara, come in?"

"Oh, yes, long ago."

"That's right; then I shall not send her off this time." A pause while the old sailor adjusted his glasses and opened his book.

"I am not satisfied with Tom!" he exclaimed abruptly, "not at all satisfied. I told him to write his weekly letter every Sunday, and he has missed twice lately."

"But, dear father, he never fails to write once a week."

"That's not it; sometimes he writes on Saturday and sometimes on Tuesday. It shows a want of method—a—I'll tell him what I think of it to-night."

"Don't write crossly, dad. It must be bad to have disagreeable letters from home when one is far away."

"Well, women *are* contradictious creatures. Why,

you quarreled like cat and dog when you were together," growled her father.

"Never mind, we are very good friends when we are apart."

"Janet," resumed Captain Rowley, laying down his book after a few minutes' silence, during which Janet knelt on one of the window-seats, and resting her arms on the ledge gazed at the scene before her without seeing it, so lost was she in her own imaginings, "I wish you would look at my dress suit; I haven't worn it for months."

"Why, where *are* you going?" coming to sit on the arm of his chair.

"Well, you see, I met Palliser just now as I was going down to the Grange, and we had a talk. He has just come back from—Spain, I think, and intends to stay at the old hall till after Christmas. Gad, he looks a new man. You remember what a white, weary, worn sort of fellow he seemed at that Christmas kick-up he gave two years ago? He has hardly been here since. Well, he looks as bright and sunburnt and jolly as a sandboy."

"I hope he will give another party next Christmas," quoth Janet.

"He is always very friendly to me," returned her father. "I have promised to go up to the hall for a couple of days' shooting next week—on Tuesday. He has some fellows staying with him, so I must take my best togs, and I must run up to town to see why the deuce they don't pay me that legacy poor old timbertoes, Admiral Hearty, left me—to buy a mourning ring, indeed—as if I would spend fifty pounds on a

ring—so I think I'll treat myself to a new pair of shoes at Thomas's. It's about five years since I had a dress pair, by George!"

"Yes, do, dear. I am so glad you are going to the Hall; it will brighten you up. And the squire seems all right? It must have been an awful shock to him, the cruel death of his wife."

"It would have been better if she had died in her bed; but the death was a great relief."

So saying, the captain resumed his book, while Janet sat on, thinking, till the book slid from the reader's grasp, and a low, long drawn snore proclaimed that warmth and weariness had done their work.

Then she stole gently away to her own room and changed her cotton frock for a dress more suited for evening, arranging her fair locks as becomingly as she could, and, tying up a little posy of deep red carnations and verbena, placed it ready to fasten at the throat of her dress before going up to the vicarage after dinner.

"One may as well leave a pleasant last impression," she said to herself as she looked in the glass, but the tears were in her eyes while she thought it.

CHAPTER II.

RANDALL PALLISER OF MERVYN HALL.

TIME the inexorable ran on, and Maurice Winyard was gone.

To the last Janet was kind but immovable, and a final flash of indignation helped Maurice to avoid a disgraceful breakdown when he said good-by to her.

She was, however, wonderfully kind and thoughtful to the tearful mother with whom Maurice was a prime favorite, and with whom she passed most of her time, as Captain Rowley was away for four or five days at Mervyn Hall.

Yet she was truly grieved to say farewell to her old playmate. Indeed she was puzzled by her own feelings, and felt vaguely that, had she been less accustomed to Maurice, she might have been in love with him.

Mary Winyard, her chief friend, was rather offended by Janet's indifference to the beloved brother whom she considered irresistible. Indeed the young ladies had that mysterious passage of arms termed by the experienced in such matters "a few words"—the result of which was a temporary coolness, inexpressibly painful to both—so unpleasant in fact that it did not last long.

But though Janet Rowley was soon completely

reconciled to the indignant sister, a little root of bitterness developed itself in Mary's heart and influenced her longer than her friend imagined.

Two days after Maurice had said his last adieu, Captain Rowley returned, highly pleased with his visit, the sport, the host, the company, and bringing with him sundry brace of grouse, half of which he immediately dispatched to his friend the vicar.

"Eh! Janet, my dear, I've had a fine time, but I'm afraid I have stayed a little too long; you are looking dull and white, my girlie," he exclaimed, when they had exchanged greetings.

"Oh, I am quite well; but we have all been rather miserable about Maurice. I *am* sorry for Mrs. Winyard; she is not at all strong, and she is *so* fond of Maurice."

"But she can't expect to keep a young fellow like him at her apron-string all his life."

"I suppose not—still it is rather hard for her to part with him. It seems a great mistake to be too fond of anyone."

"Well, perhaps it is. Look here, Janet; I have asked Palliser to lunch here on Monday. He is coming in to the Bench, and will come on here after."

"Oh, my dear father, why did you ask him? It will be an awful nuisance getting a proper luncheon ready for him. Just think of all he is accustomed to, and then think of Barbara's cooking."

"Pooh! Nonsense!" returned her father. "Palliser isn't a cad. What satisfies me will satisfy him. We'll give him some cold game and a currie. I will make it myself. He will not starve on that."

"No, I suppose not," returned Janet. "You know best. But I shall borrow Helen Verner's beautiful fruit spoons and——"

"Gad! You'll do nothing of the kind. Palliser is welcome to the best I have, but I'll have no sham finery, by George!"

"Ah, yes! It was a shabby thought. I feel rather ashamed of myself. Mr. Palliser impressed me as being a very grand seigneur, indeed. Certainly not a man to treat lightly."

"Oh, he seems much younger than he was two years ago. He asked very kindly after you and seemed to remember you quite well."

"That is wonderful, for I have not seen him half a dozen times, though I remember him quite well."

"He is a good-looking fellow, and a capital shot. I suppose we'll have a grand new mistress of the Hall one of these days. He talks of being down here a good deal in future. Poor fellow, his first marriage was a terrible mistake."

"I should have imagined he was too sensible to make a mistake in such a matter."

"Bless your little heart, you know nothing about it. The wise make fools of themselves in matrimonial affairs. I had a very sensible letter from Tom yesterday," and he plunged into a disquisition on his son's prospects, and Palliser was forgotten.

The return of the squire of Mervyn Hall was an important event in the estimation of Langford, generally. For some seven or eight years he had been almost lost to the county, for on leaving college he had been trapped into marriage with a fascinating adven-

turess, and when too late he discovered details of her past career too disgraceful to admit of pardon or reparation. To live with her was impossible, to get rid of her was equally impossible, as she was exceedingly careful not to forfeit the allowance he was compelled to make her by any imprudence, and even contrived by eloquent and judicious silence to create a little coterie of sympathizers, who looked upon her as a victim. Palliser, a proud and sensitive man, was even more keenly alive to the ridicule than the pain of his position, and when the terrible accident referred to by Maurice Winyard freed him from the chains that galled him so cruelly, even he was ashamed of the joyous exultation which swelled his heart and seemed to pour fresh youth into his veins.

Highly conservative by nature and training, the idea that the paternal acres should pass from the direct line to a distant and not too respectable kinsman of the same name, was intolerable to Palliser; therefore the unexpected restoration of his freedom was inexpressibly delightful.

No wonder, then, that Southshire and Langford opened their arms to receive him, and no one could have accepted the welcome so cordially offered more graciously than the liberated lord of Mervyn Hall. He dined with all who asked him, and from luncheons or even afternoon teas he turned not away. Moreover, he was lavish of his own hospitalities; at first toward his male acquaintances only, but rumor averred that he meditated a series of dinner parties to ladies as well as gentlemen.

It was therefore not to be wondered at that so

young and inexperienced a hostess as Janet Rowley considered Palliser rather a formidable guest.

In truth she did not give many thoughts to his coming after the first discussion with her father. They would just do their best and leave the rest to Providence. She was sure of plenty of flowers, and not even the Mervyn gardens could produce finer pears than the solitary "Marie Louise" tree, which was the glory of the Navarino grounds.

"And you are going to have Mr. Palliser to luncheon?" said Mary Winyard to Janet the day before that event was to take place, when the latter appeared in the afternoon with an offering of fruit and flowers, as she often did—for the vicarage gardens were not so carefully tended, nor was their aspect so favorable as that of Navarino Cottage.

"Yes; that is, my father expects him—but he may not come. Luncheon is not like a dinner, you know."

"Oh, he will not disappoint you," said Mrs. Winyard. "He is very well-bred, and I am sure a kind, generous man. He called here the day after my dear boy left us, and gave the vicar a check for twenty-five pounds toward the repair of the schoolhouse," and Mrs. Winyard sighed as if the gift was a fresh misfortune. She was a small, gentle woman, with soft gray hair, and pretty, though faded eyes. She was a noiseless creature, yet marvelously enduring, and greatly beloved by her numerous children, to whom she was a kind Providence, while the vicar, a big, loud-voiced man of low church and intensely Protestant views, was absolutely ruled by her. Never had her quiet strength been so tried as by the recent parting from Maurice,

who was her idol. It was no wonder that all subjects were more or less tinged with a somber hue, and few could be mentioned without a sigh.

"That was very nice indeed!" cried Janet. "Now, dear Mrs. Winyard, you must eat one of my peaches; they are my very own, from the tree dad planted for me the day I was twelve years old; and Mary says you have scarcely eaten anything for the last week."

"Thank you, my dear, my heart is still too full to eat much; but time will reconcile me."

"You must try to eat, though; you know fasting will do no good."

"My mother is not so sensible as you are, Janet," said Mary reproachfully. "You are so wise and so strong, you can see *anyone* go with dry eyes."

"If I am not naturally tearful, Mary, I cannot help it. I am sure I miss Maurice as much as any of you," cried Janet quickly.

"Poor fellow! Few have as much heart as he has," sighed Mary.

Janet looked at her half angrily, half imploringly.

"My dear child, you must not fancy we want you to be unhappy," said Mrs. Winyard, with a smile. "You must cheer us up. Mary and the rest have had a sad time of it with me; I must not give way any longer. I am thinking of going to my sister at Westerton; a little change will set me up. I shall come back quite myself, I hope. How did your father enjoy his visit to the Hall?"

"Very much indeed. He shot I don't know how many birds, and met some pleasant people."

"Poor Mr. Palliser," sighed Mrs. Winyard. "I re-

member so well all the talk there was about his wedding. He was a very impetuous, headstrong young man, and has suffered accordingly. He was an only son, you know, and much spoiled. His two sisters were older than he was. I hope he will make a nice suitable marriage now. Are you going to have Hopkins to help to-morrow, my dear?"

"Oh, no; it is not worth while for only one person in addition to our noble selves," said Janet, "though Barbara is a little awkward about waiting. However, if my father will only talk and not get cross, we will do very well," and Janet rose to depart.

"I think we may have a few lines from Maurice by the pilot to-morrow or the day after," said the mother.

"I hope so."

"Janet does not care for such trifles," cried Mary.

"Why are you so disagreeable, Mary?" whispered Janet, as they left the room together.

"You know very well," was the stern reply.

. . . . .

The expected Monday was a wild, wet morning, and Janet found it difficult to get the flowers she wanted. However, she managed to make the table look very pretty, and to put on her best "go-to-meeting" dress of thin black gauzy stuff, which she had chosen with a view to economy and durability—black suited her fair complexion and bright hair (a fact of which she was quite aware)—before the expected guest arrived. He was lounging comfortably in an easy-chair when she came in, talking cheerily to Captain Rowley, and started up to greet her.

Janet looked at him more carefully than she had

ever done before, and at once decided that he was much better looking than she thought.

Randal Palliser was tall and well set up. Moreover, he had a decided air of distinction. His hair was dark and curly, his eyes still darker, rather small, exceedingly keen, with a fierce light in them sometimes. A heavy mustache hid his mouth, and so concealed one important indication of character, but the chin being clean-shaved showed strength and firmness.

"I am going to venture a personal observation," he said when Rowley reintroduced him to his daughter, who observed his voice was deep, almost harsh, though his accent was refined. "Miss Rowley has grown considerably since I had the pleasure of seeing her. May I say so without offending?"

"You certainly may," replied Janet, turning from the keen, searching glance with which he eyed her from head to foot. "I have passed the age of growing, so do not disdain to be reminded of it; but I don't think I am really taller, I only look older."

"Well, perhaps so. I can only record the impression I have received. It must be two years since we met."

"Not till Christmas," said Janet, flattered by his recollection of her. "You remember the delightful ball you gave?"

"Very glad it has left such a pleasant memory. Shall I give another next Christmas?"

"Oh, yes, pray do!"

"Luncheon ready, Janet?" asked her father.

"Yes, quite."

"Come then, Mr. Palliser."

The little dining room looked pretty and com-

fortable, for Janet, without asking the captain, had lit a fire of coal and wood, which was particularly welcome on this first wet, chill day after a long spell of sunshine.

"It is delightful to see a fire," exclaimed Palliser. "They let me breakfast without one this morning. I have been so long away that I have forgotten how to manage my servants."

Then the conversation turned on Palliser's travels, and he gave some brief graphic descriptions of what he had seen—a bull fight—the Alhambra—the Escurial.

Janet was deeply interested, and put many questions respecting its country and people that showed she knew more of the subject than the ordinary school-bred young lady.

"I suspect you are a voracious reader, Miss Rowley?" said Palliser, with another long, penetrating look—a look that, to her annoyance, brought the color to her cheek. It was so foolish, so uncalled for, so like a mere country-bred miss to blush when a mere new acquaintance let his eyes rest upon her.

"I believe you," her father was saying, while she scolded herself. "Give her a book and she'll forget everything and everyone and read till all's blue."

"Only when it is a book I like very much," murmured Janet apologetically.

"It is an idling, useless habit," resumed Captain Rowley, shaking his head. "Janet and I have a bit of quarreling over it sometimes. What good can poring over books do a girl? Only unfit her for her natural work, and—and spoil her complexion."

"Thank Heaven, her studies have not as yet produced that fatal effect on Miss Rowley," said Palliser, smiling pleasantly. "What good can reading do, Captain Rowley? Why, make a charming companion of the reader. You must come up to the hall and range through the library at your own sweet will."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Janet, her eyes sparkling gratefully. "You must not fancy my father is the tyrant he represents himself. He gives me an occasional scolding—but really I have all the reading I want."

"Yes; I suspect you do very much what you like," returned Palliser significantly.

"Talking of Spain," resumed Captain Rowley, "I remember when I was in the Mediterranean, making an expedition to Granada with three of my messmates," and he plunged into an account of the difficulties they had got into in consequence of their ignorance of Spanish. This lasted till luncheon was finished.

Palliser did not offer to go away at once; he accompanied his young hostess into the drawing room, and, as the rain clouds had cleared away, admired the view from the windows and said that an open prospect was the one thing wanting at Mervyn Hall.

"It is rather too much shut in with trees; I shall have them thinned in some directions. I rather expect my sister to stay with me next week; then you must come and have a look through my books. I see a piano; do you play or sing?"

"Both, but after a very schoolgirl fashion," said Janet. "In short, I can do nothing in particular," she added good-humoredly.

"Except read, eh?" said Palliser, "and that atones for everything."

"Not quite, I fear," she replied.

"The vicar's eldest boy has just gone out to India, hasn't he?" asked Palliser of Captain Rowley.

"Yes. His womankind haven't done crying over him yet, nor this girl of mine either."

"Ah!" said Palliser, smiling, while his eyes sought hers. "I think I remember you danced about seventeen times with him at my famous Christmas party."

"Oh, no, Mr. Palliser. There were only sixteen dances. I waltzed with Frank Verner and Dick Palliser, and two or three others," exclaimed Janet, laughing, and a good deal surprised that the lord of Mervyn Hall should have noticed her.

"Poor fellow!" he resumed. "He must be crying his eyes out over the sad parting with his charming playfellow."

"I assure you, Maurice Winyard is not given to shedding tears. He was sorry to leave us all, but he was as glad to go as—I should have been in his place," cried Janet warmly.

"Then do you sigh to leave your happy valley, Miss Rowley?"

"Yes, I am ashamed to say, for I am very happy; but I suppose people grow restless occasionally."

Palliser did not answer for a moment, then he said, "You acknowledge yourself happy! What a wonderful young lady. By the way, Captain Rowley, why should you wait for my sister's coming to give me the pleasure of a visit? Will you and Miss Rowley come and lunch with me on Thursday next, or any other

day that suits you? I will get Colonel and Miss Verner to meet you."

"Not on Thursday," said Captain Rowley. "I am going to see my potatoes planted, and can't put it off."

"Well, Friday, then?"

"Thank you, yes—if it's fine. It's rather too long a tramp in wet weather."

"It is rather too long for Miss Rowley in any weather," exclaimed Palliser. "I will send the carriage for you, if you will allow me."

"Oh, no, it is quite unnecessary," said Janet. "I walk a great deal with my father. I can manage ten miles on end quite well. Mary Winyard and I often walk over to the Hall and trespass on your grounds. I fancy we know your woods better than you do yourself."

"I doubt that," returned Palliser, a sort of wistful look softening his hard eyes. "I have spent many happy boyish days tramping through them, Miss Rowley, before you were born."

"Not very long before," she returned.

"By George, you look three or four years younger than when you were here last!" exclaimed Rowley.

"Well, you must show me through them," said Palliser, rising to take leave, "and we shall see who knows them best. I daresay poor young Winyard is thinking of his last stroll there, for I suppose *he* too was among the trespassers."

"Oh, yes, of course," returned Janet, with a bright smile and a little defiant nod.

Palliser shook his head as he shook hands with her.

"Then on Friday I hope to see you; and if we have

bad weather I will send the brougham. We can amuse ourselves indoors with the books and pictures for once. Good-by, Captain Rowley, and many thanks for a couple of delightful hours," and Palliser bowed himself out.

"Why did you not say how nice he is, dad?" exclaimed Janet, when he had driven off in the dogcart, which had been waiting for him. "It will be great fun going to luncheon and examining the library; only I hope the books are not too handsomely bound, or I shall not like to borrow them; and I have read nearly everything at the vicarage."

"I think he liked the curry," said her father, disregarding her observations, "and he didn't turn up his nose at the bitter beer. Palliser is too much a gentleman to give himself airs. He'll be quite an acquisition to the neighborhood. Janet, my dear, get me the *Standard*, I've not had time to look at it to-day. I wish you would read a bit for me, for my eyes feel a little tired. There's an article on the recent condition of the navy (which is a disgrace to the nation, by Jove), read it to me," and he settled himself in his favorite armchair with a disgracefully obvious intention of taking forty winks.

Palliser drove homeward at a rapid pace. Though a rather spoiled man of the world, in spite of the mistakes and misfortunes of his earlier manhood, he had still a certain taste for simplicity and naturalness. He had been sincere in his assertion that he had enjoyed his visit to Navarino Cottage. He had a kind of liking for the old sailor, partly a legacy from his early days—those days "when the light that surronuds us is

all from within," and lends a charm to all connected with them. But he also was greatly struck with his old acquaintance's daughter.

Janet seemed to him the embodiment of health, mental and physical, without a tinge of the coarseness or loudness that sometimes accompanies those fortunate conditions. "With all her simple straightforwardness she has distinction, and the promise of a superb figure," thought Palliser; "not exactly a beauty, but she'll develop into something quite out of the common. She seems like a woman one could trust—*many* are to be trusted." And here a lady passed in a pony phaëton, and bowed graciously; Palliser raised his hat, while a hard look came over his face, changing his appearance utterly.

"Ah, madam!" he muttered, "the chances for your son succeeding to the family estates are considerably remote. How natural it is to hate one's successor; although he is one's own flesh and blood. However, you shall not be long heir, Richard Egerton."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE LIBRARY.

THE prosperous banker of Langford was the second or third cousin of Randal. In his boyhood they had been friendly, and Randal was always welcome at the banker's table, but after Randal Palliser's hasty and unfortunate marriage a curious dislike to his relative grew up in his mind. Richard Egerton or his son would inherit after him if he died without a legitimate male heir, and by his own folly he was cut off from the chance of having one so long as the adventuress who had entrapped him lived; for, shameful as her life had been previously, she was careful to give her unfortunate husband no chance of getting rid of her. He had to buy freedom from her presence and from continual annoyance at a high price, and the sense of relief consequent on her removal from this mortal scene was almost intoxicating. He was anxious to marry, yet half afraid to risk making the all-important choice. He must find someone whose past was known to all among whom she lived. She must be young, too, and fair—fair with the beauty of health—and well born. Palliser was a passionate admirer of beauty and eager in the pursuit of whatever was the whim of the moment; two weaknesses which had betrayed him into the galling position he had endured for more than

seven years. But that was all over now, and he felt once more lord of himself and able to think of the future with hope, and the sunshine of his mood was reflected on all, down to the humblest groom in his hitherto neglected stables.

The days which intervened between this memorable Monday and the promised visit to Mervyn Hall went swiftly, for Janet was a busy creature and rarely found her day quite long enough. Indeed, she was apt to get her time into a tangle from undertaking rather more than she was able to accomplish, and then, instead of keeping steadily to work to clear it off, yielding to the temptation to read "just a few pages more" of some entrancing book, or "to try over" that new waltz which someone had sent her, when she ought to have been regulating the linen cupboard or entering items in the daily expenditure book. Thus she was apt to fall behindhand, which necessitated a rush and a scramble to get things into their proper order, and generally entailed a scolding from her father, a confession on her part, a tender reconciliation, and a stern determination in the culprit's own mind to begin afresh on the following Monday and to keep everything straight forever after.

Beside the home office work, Janet was, of course, as much a district visitor as the vicar's daughters—a Sunday-school teacher, and a member of the Dorcas Club—in all of which she was more or less a failure. She believed all the tales the mendacious old women and overburdened mothers told her, and denuded herself of her pocket money, which was as a drop in the ocean of misery she tried to relieve, and called down

stern rebukes from the captain for this misappropriation of her funds. But with the poor she was an immense favorite; she never preached, she listened sympathetically to their sad stories, and sometimes wept with the narrators; she did not scold them because their houses were not in apple-pie order—moreover, she always asked permission to come in, as politely as she would at Meryvn Hall itself, and for all her pains the vicar declared that two or three visitors of her stamp would suffice to pauperize every parish in the county. He little knew how she hated the work, even more than teaching in the Sunday-school. From this task, however, she took courage and freed herself when about nineteen, as there were more volunteers for this work than for other fields of labor. She was at times cast down by the sense of her own weakness and imperfections, and determined over and over again to cultivate self-control and reason, and, above all, the habit of saying "No!" a word impossible to Janet.

"Yet I ought to have a backbone," she thought, one day, as she was returning from a very depressing round in one of the poorest districts. "I sometimes fancy I am ever so much cleverer than Mary, because I like to read tough books. But she has far more sense, and is twice as useful. I wish I had not said I would try and get poor old Grannie Brown eighteenpence more out of the poor box, for I am afraid the vicar will not give it. He has so much to do with so little money, and I haven't a penny left. I know she will expect it, and never believe I asked for it. How tiresome everything is. I wish I had a great deal of money. Money is such a help."

Here a noise of horse's hoofs on the pavement behind made her draw to one side, but the horse paused, and looking up she recognized Palliser dismounting.

"Ha, Miss Rowley!" he exclaimed, and he drew the bridle over his arm, "you are out late."

"I have been out for a long time, too," returned Janet with a sigh.

"And not agreeably employed, I am afraid," returned Palliser, with a smile. "You do not look happy."

"Happy! I am wretched! I have been visiting the poor people in my district, and I hate it."

"Then don't go."

"Oh! I cannot refuse to go; it would be so cowardly and selfish to hold back, and I suppose it does *some* good," dejectedly.

"A great deal more harm than good, Miss Rowley; it teaches these people to look for assistance, and destroys the bracing sense of independence."

"I cannot believe it is not right to try and help the poor souls; they are more helpless than you can imagine. But I am not at all sure *I* am of any real use. The vicar says I am most injudicious."

"I have no doubt you are."

"But why?" she asked earnestly, anxious to get at the reason of her own failure.

"Because you are much too charmingly sympathetic not to be imposed upon," returned Palliser, gazing at her with the sort of a look that always confused her. "A woman—a young woman—who can deal successfully with the poor must be hard and unlovable."

"There must be something wrong somewhere," said Janet dejectedly.

"There is a great deal wrong everywhere. There is nothing more puzzling than the question how to assist the poor without pauperizing them, and now I am going to set a splendid example of inconsistency," and he took two or three sovereigns out of his pocket. "Will you distribute this among your poor people?"

Janet's eyes sparkled.

"How kind and good you are," she cried. "You make me quite happy—at any rate, for the present. I will go and get some change at once and give some of it to the worst-off people before I go home. There is a poor sick boy in Miller's Alley and an old woman who cannot help herself; but, dear Mr. Palliser, don't tell the vicar. He would want to direct me what I am to do with the money—and—you understand?"

"I understand you perfectly and you may trust me; but are you going to send me off as a reward for divining your wishes?" For she had held out her hand as if to bid him good-by.

"You see I want to go to the grocer's to get change, and I do not want to take you out of your way, so——"

"I understand. I am dismissed," said Palliser, smiling.

"I really do not want you to go away," began Janet, and then stopped, coloring deeply, and greatly ashamed of her own confusion.

"Ah! you are too kind to tell me the whole cruel truth. So I shall leave you; but you must not forget your engagement to lunch with me on Friday."

"Oh, no! I am very pleased to come, and I don't

want to send you away, only I do want to go back to one or two of my poor people."

"Well, good-by. And when you have any more secrets to keep, confide them to me."

"Oh! I never have any, except this one."

They shook hands, and Janet turned into the main street full of exultation.

"I am terribly late, dearest dad," she cried, on reaching home an hour later, and knowing what an offense a breach of punctuality was in her father's eyes, "but I will tell you all about it after dinner."

"I hope you have a good excuse," returned Captain Rowley sternly, "for I have no patience with these irregularities. There's a letter for you—from young Winyard, I fancy. Mary brought it this afternoon. Now don't attempt to open it till after dinner."

When that meal was over the captain solemnly demanded an explanation of his daughter's delinquency. With much animation she detailed her encounter with Palliser, and his generosity to her poor friends.

"Pooh!" growled Captain Rowley. "Two or three sovereigns are not much to him; but his readiness to give is anything but a virtue. I shall tell him he could not have a worse almoner than yourself."

"You are a disagreeable dad! But do so if you like. It strikes me that he won't refuse when I ask him."

"Look here, Janet," said her father seriously. "Don't you be conceited or make a fool of yourself. These high-class men of the world have wonderfully sweet ways with them, and seem to consider the girl they happen to be talking to the only one in the world.

But if you suppose a man like Palliser, accustomed as he is to the finest of fine ladies, would make a fool of himself about a country-bred lassie like yourself you are greatly mistaken. I daresay you are worth a dozen of him, but that does not matter; your rusticity will outweigh your merits in his world."

"What an unkind speech," cried Janet, coloring to the roots of her hair, and an angry spark lighting up her very expressive eyes. "Do you think I am so weak, so silly, as to fancy for a moment that Mr. Palliser would think of me as anything—anything but a well-intentioned, inoffensive girl—not remember that I consider him an unapproachable hero? If he is a well-born gentleman, *I* am a well-born lady. But I do think if I wanted help for any charitable purpose he would give it to me. I wish you had not said what you have. I shall not feel at ease with Mr. Palliser when I see him again."

"What a fire-and-tow piece of goods you are, Janet—by George, I wish I had held my tongue! But for all that, it is right to warn you against such a smooth-tongued gentleman. Most young girls are ready enough to swallow all the sweet things offered to them, but——"

"But *your* daughter has a little more common sense, you will find," interrupted Janet. "And now I shall read Maurice's letter."

And she was soon deep in its contents, while Captain Rowley, with a somewhat crestfallen aspect, solaced himself with the one bumper of port which was his allowance after dinner.

Meantime Janet's color gradually toned down.

She was pleased and touched by her letter. Maurice expressed himself as sorry for showing the ill temper of which he was guilty when they parted, and assured her he was going to take her advice on many points, but that he never would or could regard her as anything other than the queen of his heart, and ended by imploring for a letter to meet him on his arrival at Umballah.

"I really think Maurice Winyard is nicer than Mr. Palliser," thought Janet as she folded up the letter. "What nice honest eyes he has! Now Mr. Palliser's always make me uncomfortable somehow. But I must not allow myself to be so fanciful. I shall look at him as straightly as he does at me. Perhaps he thinks I am very badly dressed," and she sighed, for Janet had a strong taste for pretty things. "I must write a nice long letter to Maurice and tell him all about Mr. Palliser. I shall miss him frightfully if there is a dance at Mervyn Hall this winter."

"Well, Janet, what does the youngster say?" asked Captain Rowley, who was anxious to "open communications" once more with his daughter.

"Oh! he seems to have recovered his spirits a little," she returned, putting the letter in her pocket. "He is going to be desperately industrious, and get on at a great pace."

"I'm sure I hope he will. Come, Janet, are you going to give me my revenge? You gave me a tremendous thrashing last night."

"I don't think I will play with you after your disagreeable speeches. Yes, they were most disagreeable."

"Well, I can't help it. I'll go up to the vicarage——"

"No, dad, you must not. I hear the rain, and the clouds were gathering as I came back. You shall have your game, you suspicious, unkind old dear," and she went round to where he sat, and kissed the top of his head where there was a bright and shining place.

By Friday the weather had settled again into a fine gray autumnal condition, with the wind west by north, the air fresh but not cold, and to Janet's delight admirably suited to exercise. She greatly enjoyed her walk to the Hall with her father. It was just long enough to make a short rest pleasant, and the exercise sent her in with a glowing color and sparkling eyes.

Mervyn Hall was a more charming than a splendid place, situated on the first rise of the swelling upland. It was richly wooded, with a fine deer park, stretching up the steeper part of a slope, the house of Queen Anne period, built of red Dutch bricks, with white stone copings, and a fine sloping roof with tall chimneys.

Janet had often passed the stately front, but had never crossed the threshold except on the occasion of the famous dance, which Palliser from some whim had given on the occasion of a rare visit to the family seat. The sober certainty of daylight's stateliness invested the mansion with greater dignity in Janet's eyes than the lights, the crowd, the hubbub of the dance.

A solemn butler conducted Captain Rowley and his daughter to the smaller of two large drawing rooms, where the master of the house was standing before the fire, which was very acceptable in the large

and rather uninhabited looking room, and in a low easy-chair sat a lady—a very graceful, elegant woman, admirably dressed in a dark heather-tinted, tweed morning costume; she had almost black hair, and dark, sleepy eyes, very different from Palliser's in expression, and yet she was like him—a sort of family likeness.

When the solemn butler announced Captain and Miss Rowley in very audible tones, Palliser came quickly forward with smiling eyes to receive them with flattering cordiality; then, turning toward the fireplace, waved his hand, saying, "My sister, Lady Saville, who surprised me very agreeably yesterday—I did not expect her quite so soon."

Lady Saville rose languidly, and held out her hand to Janet, and then to her father.

"*You* cannot remember me," she said, "but I hope I have a place in *your* memory, Captain Rowley, for I have not forgotten your letting me gather strawberries in your garden when my poor dear mother took me to see you ages ago—not long before she died."

The old sailor protested gallantly that the halycon day had been ever present to him.

"It must be more than ten years since I saw this dear old place," she said, settling herself again in her chair, and continuing to talk in subdued tones to the admiring captain, while Palliser drew Janet to the window to point out where he intended to make an opening in the wood that a peep at the country beyond might be obtained.

"You walked all the way here?" he broke off from his explanation to exclaim.

"It is not much more than three miles, and I quite enjoyed it.

"You look as if you had; I never knew before the beautifying properties of exercise."

"Pleasant things make one look pleasant, I suppose?" said Janet in some confusion, a struggle between gratified vanity at his undisguised admiration and a vivid recollection of her father's warning disturbing her equanimity.

"How does your district get on?" resumed Palliser; "and have you any more secrets to intrust me with?"

"No, but I have made some poor things very happy, thanks to you."

"Well, you must let me employ you to distribute my charity again."

"Oh, my father says I am not to ask you for any more money."

"He cannot quarrel with *you* if I offer it."

"No, I suppose not; but I shall not want any more for a while."

"My sister hopes to act as mistress of the house for some time," said Palliser abruptly. "Her husband, Sir Frederic Saville, has gone to India to shoot big game, and her boys are at school, so she is alone. I think you will like her; she is bright and very adaptable."

"She is charming; and if she ever talks to me I am sure I shall be very pleased."

"You puzzle me a good deal, Miss Rowley," said Palliser, leaning his back against the window frame and looking at her at his ease. "I cannot make out whether

you have an abjectly low opinion of yourself or are perfectly assured."

"Sometimes I am one and sometimes the other," returned Janet thoughtfully. "Maurice Winyard always told me I was dreadfully inconsistent."

"What an audacious youngster! I should not dare to make such a speech."

"No; I daresay not—but I have known Maurice all my life."

"I see the advantages of his position, Miss Rowley."

The announcement of "Colonel and Miss Verner" broke off their conversation, and this arrival was quickly followed by that of a neighboring squire and squiress with a man who was staying with them.

Then came luncheon, which was the most amusing meal at which Janet had ever assisted.

The viands, the table decorations, the service, were all superior to anything Janet had ever seen before, for though some smart dinners were given at Langford Janet was not invited to them. It was the talk that amused and interested her. Lady Saville, without saying anything striking, managed to keep the ball rolling and to draw out everyone. She sat between Captain Rowley and Colonel Verner, the latter a rather grumpy veteran, whom she soothed and flattered into a very benign condition. Of course, Palliser had the squiress on his right, and Miss Verner who was a good deal older than Janet on his left, but the latter was quite happy between the squire and his guest, a bright young barrister, well versed in theaters, concerts, balls, and all the routine of London, to whom she was well pleased to listen, though by no means in silence.

Luncheon over, the party set out to look at the grounds and stables, and to discuss the improvements Palliser proposed to make, and the sun had disappeared behind the western woods before the squire's carriage and the colonel's pony chaise came round for their owners. Captain Rowley and his daughter, having no conveyance, were free to remain a little longer if they chose.

"Do stay and have a cup of tea with me," said Lady Saville, in her soft, caressing way to Janet. "Randal, make Captain Rowley stay. They can have the phaëton to take them home."

"Or better still, I'll drive you back myself in the dogcart," cried Palliser. "You don't object to a dogcart, Miss Rowley?"

"Oh, no! I enjoy driving immensely."

"In the meantime come and look at the library," he continued. "It was to look at it I lured you here."

"And you must come with me to my sanctum," said Lady Saville to Rowley. "I do not care for the solemnities of a library; besides, I want to show you some wonderful Indian weapons Sir Frederic sent home to my brother."

"Come then, this way," said Palliser, and Janet followed him down a passage softly carpeted and decorated with carved cabinets, huge china vases, and stands full of flowering plants, to a wide door, which admitted to a grand room with an arched ceiling, lined on three sides with books. The fourth was pierced by tall windows, furnished with window-seats, great marquetry tables, and comfortable chairs, sofas, and settees covered with green leather, busts, and stands

for holding heavy books of prints. All the usual furniture and decorations of a luxurious library appeared before the delighted eyes of Janet.

She paused when she had crossed the threshold and looked round.

"What a paradise of books!" she said, almost in a whisper.

"I don't know that I should apply such a term to it," said Palliser, smiling.

"I feel a sort of awe," she went on. "After all, we are in the presence of mighty spirits."

"Say living influences rather," and Palliser proceeded to explain that the library at Mervyn was originally small, but that his grandfather had greatly enlarged it. He showed her the small space occupied by the original collection. "My father was a great lover of books, and bought a great quantity. Had he lived he would have made this a fine library, but he died while I was a child. Since, I have added a few works of importance—from time to time."

"Then you are fond of reading, too?" said Janet.

"Well, yes—occasionally. There is so much to be done that one does not get time to do anything well."

"Even I find that," she returned.

"I should not have thought so," said Palliser, with a smile; "but I must not forget your poor old folk."

"Yes"—with a sigh—"they take up a great deal of time."

"*Why* do you worry about them? At this side, Miss Rowley, are all the novels—a gorgeous array;

but you must not read any or all of them, mademoiselle. You must ask my permission."

"Very well," said Janet, "and these splendid looking big books?"

"They are volumes of history and biography; then travels and geography. Those shelves contain philosophical works, etc."

"What wealth!" sighed Janet, and she began to walk slowly round, looking at the titles.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "here is one I have read about in the *Spectator*: 'Buckle's History of Civilization.' It must be a wonderful book."

"It is; but I do not think you would get through it."

"Why?"

"It is too heavy and indigestible for so young and fair a creature as you are," returned Palliser.

"Being young and fair need not make one stupid," said Janet, disregarding the compliment.

Palliser took down the first volume and handed it to her.

"Certainly not; but there is a certain fitness of things which you outrage by such studies. Nevertheless, take the book if you fancy it."

"Thank you very much. But I don't like to take it, it is so beautifully bound."

"Pooh! do not think about *that*. *You* will do it no harm. Take both volumes," and he laid them on one of the tables.

"Now sit down here, and rest; you have been walking about ever since luncheon."

Janet complied.

Palliser exercised a sort of fascination over her,

though she mentally repeated that his evident interest in herself was only the passing whim of a *blasé* man of wealth and fashion; yet he attracted her.

She had a curious longing to try her strength against his. Still she was a little afraid of him; a little doubtful of him.

But to-day he was very gentle, and soon drew her to talk of her past life and experiences.

He was much amused at the mixture of simplicity and common sense in her talk, the utmost frankness streaked with sudden eddies of piquant reserve.

Thus he heard of how she had paid two visits to an uncle in London, her mother's brother, who went every day to Somerset House, and had a daughter about her own age; also of the wild delight of going to theaters, and general interest and joy of being in London.

"I suppose you found Langford rather dull after the strong excitement of town life?" said Palliser, watching her through his half-closed eyes.

"No, not exactly. I love Langford in spring and summer and autumn, but I should like London in winter."

"What? In spite of the fogs?"

"They were not very bad when I was there. I used to enjoy looking at the shop windows when they were lit up."

"My dear Miss Rowley, that was not at all an intellectual amusement."

"No, of course not; but I am not intellectual."

"I am not sure; you have asked for a very tough book."

"But it may be too much for me; still, I should like to try it," opening the book with a loving touch and glancing at the contents.

There was something very charming in her self-forgetfulness, for her candor had in it nothing rough or abrupt. Her voice was soft and low, her manner so tranquil that it took the edge off whatever was sharp or trenchant in her utterance.

"Then pray take it with you. If it tires you, send for something else. The books here are quite at your service. Would you like another—some poetry? You are fond of poetry, I suppose? You look poetical."

Janet laughed pleasantly, as the butler entered and observed, "Her ladyship says tea is ready."

"What a bore!" cried Palliser. "It is quite heavenly to sit here listening to the first volume of your reminiscences."

"You remind me that I have talked too much," returned Janet, coloring deeply.

"No, you must not say that," exclaimed Palliser, starting up and speaking very earnestly. "Do you think me a humbug? Do you think me a soulless idiot? That I am incapable of interesting myself in your conversation? When you know me better you will think differently."

"I think you are very kind indeed; but do not let us keep Lady Saville waiting for tea." The drive back was very pleasant, and a fitting finish to one of the brightest days Janet had ever spent.

CHAPTER IV.

MORNING VISITS.

BUT the exhilarating effect did not last. Usually a day of pleasure supplied Janet with subject matter for animated talk and agreeable thought for a week at least, while this pre-eminently delightful afternoon did not inspire her with any vivid descriptions when she spoke of it to Mary Winyard or her mother.

Its principal charm was the quiet talk with the master of the house, in his delightful library, and on this she was not inclined to dilate—preferring to describe Lady Saville in glowing terms. In truth she was much fascinated by that lady, and flattered by the notice she had taken of a mere country girl like herself.

Nor did she get on very well with "Buckle's History," though it was the sort of book she loved.

She found that Palliser's face—especially his eyes—came between her and the page. This troubled her a good deal. She did not want to think of him, though she admired him in a reluctant way, and was even flattered by the notice he took of her, for she had her fair share of vanity. It was not altogether a pleasurable feeling. There was an odd uneasiness in it, a formless kind of doubt, which was inseparably associated with her new friend, and both haunted her to a distressing degree. Busy herself as she would, she could not get rid of the image which was always presenting itself.

She was forever on the alert, and imagined she heard the sound of horses' feet or the wheels of the dogcart.

She was infinitely annoyed with herself for this extraordinary weakness. "I am bewitched, I must be bewitched," she said to herself, "for I cannot get Mr. Palliser out of my head. I am not sure that I really like him, yet I wish he would come again; perhaps he might say or do something that would break the spell. I wonder if he could be revengeful. How useless it is to speculate as to what he is. I shall never know—and what is it to me?"

Here her conjectures were suddenly dispersed by faint sounds which came quickly nearer. Yes, it was the sound of wheels, and visitors in carriages were not frequent at Navarino Cottage.

Another moment settled the matter, as a low phaëton drawn by a pretty pair of ponies stopped at the gate, and she saw that Lady Saville held the reins.

Janet went forth to meet her with a frank welcome in her smiling eyes.

"So glad to find you at home," said Lady Saville, as she alighted and gave the reins to her groom. "I quite intended to come before, but I was obliged to run up to London for a couple of days, and my brother was engaged to a shooting party at the other side of the county."

"I am very glad to see you," returned Janet; "come into the dining room. We have no fire anywhere else."

"Ah," exclaimed Lady Saville, pausing and looking round, "I remember this pretty little garden quite well. What long years it is since I have seen it. The

thought of them makes me feel quite old. How is Captain Rowley?"

"Quite well, but not at home, unfortunately for him," and Janet led the way into the pretty, well-kept house.

"It is not at all cold," remarked Lady Saville, as they came to the drawing-room door. "Let us come in here, if you do not mind; the view is charming from the windows."

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Janet, and she drew forward an easy-chair, but Lady Saville preferred a window-seat. "The one thing wanting," she continued, "at Meryvn is a view. The house is rather too much shut in with trees, though the trees *are* very fine. It is such a long, long time since I stayed there, I must say I find it a little oppressive; but Randal will brighten it up. He likes society, and he has had rather a bad time of late years."

"I hope he may have happiness in the years to come, for he is very generous," said Janet heartily.

"Oh, yes, he is not half bad. Now, Miss Rowley, I came to ask you a favor. Will you put on your hat and come with me to return some of these visits? I have been such a stranger in my own county that I want you to back me up."

Janet laughed. "You do not need backing up, Lady Saville, but I will go with you for my own pleasure. I must give you a cup of tea first."

"Thank you, I should prefer one quietly in this sweet little room to sitting up in state *vis-à-vis* as to a stranger, for though I have met you but once, I don't feel as if you were a stranger."

"Thank you," exclaimed Janet, "nor do you seem strange to me. Now, if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I will make the tea myself, for our servant has gone out."

"Oh, do not take that trouble," cried her visitor.

"It is no trouble. I should in any case get it ready for my father," and she left the room.

Lady Saville looked after her with a wondering expression. It amazed her to see gentry—undoubted gentry—so denuded of this world's goods that they had but one servant, and yet looking presentable, quite presentable, and absolutely happy. Lady Saville was fairly good-natured, and quite willing to do anyone a good turn, provided it did not interfere with herself or her plans.

Before she had done wondering about Captain Rowley's impecuniosity Janet came in, carrying a Japanese tray with a pretty little tea service, some brown bread and butter, and a small old-fashioned silver teapot with a spirit lamp of less precious metal, also a pile of delicately cut bread and butter.

"You must have had the genius of the lamp to help you, you produced all these charming things so swiftly," exclaimed Lady Saville.

"My genius of the kitchen left everything ready," said Janet, smiling, as she brought over a small table to hold the tea tray, and lighted the lamp.

Then they fell into easy talk about Langford and its inhabitants.

"There is one name here I do not seem to know—Winyard, the Vicar of St. Olave's," said Lady Saville.

"He has been here for nearly seventeen years; he is

an old friend of my father's. Indeed they are the most intimate friends we have."

"Are there a great many of them? Parsons always have piles of children."

"Mr. and Mrs. Winyard have five daughters and three sons—the two eldest and the youngest are boys."

"How appalling!" ejaculated Lady Saville. "It would be a punishment too great for the worst criminal."

"They are very happy, however, and Mrs. Winyard is a dear."

"Poor soul! I must go and see her."

"Yes, pray do; she will be very pleased. She is rather depressed because Maurice has just gone out to India; she is so fond of him, and he is very nice."

"And a close ally of yours?"

"Well—yes." The unmanageable color came to her cheek. "Though we quarreled sometimes."

"What did you quarrel about?" asked Lady Saville, handing her cup to be refilled. "The usual thing, I suppose. He wished to be more than a friend?"

"Is it the usual thing?"

"Yes; quite, Miss Rowley. People always go over the border in these cases."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Janet. "Why is it so? and are you *sure* you are right?"

"Yes, quite sure. As to the reason—well, I do not know, except that the Creator made them male and female. Never be deluded about friendship with a man, my dear Miss Rowley; the thing does not exist."

"I should be sorry to believe that."

"Now tell the truth. Did not the friend of your youth want you to swear eternal fidelity to him before he went away?"

Janet could not help laughing.

"Yes, to be sure."

"That laugh was a confession, but you must be an unusually sensible girl not to have reciprocated. Why didn't you? Lovers must be scarce here. What was the matter with him? Was he ugly? or dull? or——"

"No, Lady Saville," said Janet, still laughing. "He is good-looking and really a nice, good fellow, but he was only about my own age, and seemed a mere boy to me. I never could imagine marrying anyone who was not older and wiser than myself."

"Marry!" exclaimed Lady Saville. "Oh, that would be a terribly serious ending of such an affair; but you must miss him very much."

"Yes, immensely; especially his mother."

"If it quite suits you, Miss Rowley, I think we might set out. I want to meet my brother at the station; the train gets in at six, and I must make six or seven calls in the interim. You must give me a map of the country, for I do not quite remember the localities."

"Let us begin with the Winyards," said Janet, putting the cups on the tray; "they are the nearest. I shall not keep you many minutes," and she left the room.

"No," said Lady Saville to herself, "she does not care about that boy. She is unworldly as yet. By and by she will be like other people. I wonder how she will turn out?"

She rose and walked round the room, looking at the ornaments and knickknacks, neither numerous. "Some very nice bits of good china," she thought, "and funny old miniatures. These people come of a good old stock. They are gentry, though reduced to one servant. The girl looks like it. What a dull life she must have had; yet she is as bright as if all the joys of existence were at her feet. How long will that last?"

"I think," she said aloud, as Janet reappeared, "I should like to go to Mrs. Palliser's first. They will probably be out, and though I do not want to pass them over I don't want to meet them. Randal detests Mr. Palliser, and I think his wife a horror. She had a good fortune, you know, and she does not conceal the fact."

"I do not care for her much," returned Janet, "and we scarcely know her. We are too small in every way for so important a personage; but the eldest son, Dick Palliser, is not bad. He dances very well, and I generally waltz with him at the dances where I meet him. There are generally two or three in the winter."

"Is he in the bank, too?"

"No. The second son is in the bank."

"Come then; let us be going."

As Lady Saville anticipated Mrs. Palliser was out, and they proceeded through their list of visits very successfully. Most of those they called upon were out. Mrs. Verner, who was a professional invalid, and Mrs. Winyard were, however, at home. The former had two ruling passions—first a craze for possessing every malady under the sun, secondly for knowing her

neighbors' affairs to the minutest particular. They found her in a very comfortable well-furnished drawing room, established with many cushions in a large armchair, with a knitted shawl wrapped round her.

She apologized at some length for not having called on Lady Saville, giving many particulars of the sad state of her health, which interfered so much with her social duties.

Lady Saville begged her not to think such an undertaking at all necessary. "I will come to you instead," she said sweetly.

"You are very good," said the invalid; then, turning to Janet, she asked, "Did you walk up here or come with Lady Saville?"

"Miss Rowley is kindly acting as my pilot," said her ladyship, smiling. "Langford is so changed and enlarged that I scarcely know my way about."

"Oh, indeed; very nice for you, Janet—all the other young ladies will be envying you. What news have you of your brother Tom?"

"He is quite well."

"I am glad to hear it. There was a report that he had got into some sad scrape when Captain Rowley went up to town so suddenly."

"There was no truth in it, I assure you," said Janet, smiling. "Tom never gets into scrapes. He is the steadiest boy in the world."

"Oh, yes; *you* think so, I daresay. It did look a little odd, you know, your father going off so unexpectedly, and had been up in town in May. He seldom goes to London more than once a year."

"Poor Captain Rowley," exclaimed Lady Saville,

laughing. "Is it against the laws of Langford that he should go to town more than once a year?"

"And are you going to make a long stay at the Hall, Lady Saville? You have not been here for many years. I remember the colonel. I had come to look at the place, just after he had left the service, to see how it would suit us, and you were at the Hall with Sir Frederic and a gay party. I remember a fête the squire gave. The vicar and his wife (poor Mrs. Courtown died about three years after) took us. That is nearly twelve years ago, and I don't think you look a day older. Ah, the Hall has been shut up ever since. I hope Mr. Palliser will soon bring home a bonny bride and settle down for good and all."

"I hope he will, Mrs. Verner," returned Lady Saville.

"And so young Winyard is fairly off at last," resumed the inquisitor, addressing Janet, "and a good thing, too. He had hung about here quite long enough."

"Not longer than he could help," said Janet stoutly.

"No, I suppose not. Well, I was thankful he scraped through at last, and it's just as well for you, my dear, he is gone. Young people are so silly, and apt to fancy themselves in love. He was everlastingly at the cottage, or rambling about with my little friend here, Lady Saville—a deal too much in my opinion; especially as the poor dear has no mother to look after her. Now, we all know the Winyards haven't a penny, and it would never do."

"No, certainly not!" cried Janet, with some irritability. "You must not put us all down as imbeciles."

"Ah, it is all very well to talk in that way. But most young people are imbeciles," retorted Mrs. Verner.

"Oh, very well," said Janet calmly.

"It must be curious to have one's possible love affairs discussed before your face," said Lady Saville, smiling. "I must say Miss Rowley seems to take it with great equanimity."

"Oh, we are old friends," returned Mrs. Verner, "and take a deep interest in each other's concerns."

"Oh, very profound!" ejaculated Janet.

Tea was here brought in, but declined, and then, with politely expressed regrets that she could not wait to see Miss Verner, who was expected in every moment, Lady Saville and Janet escaped.

"Your next visit will be very different," said Janet, as her new friend whipped up her ponies, their heads in the direction of the vicarage.

Mrs. Winyard and her eldest daughter received them with kindly good breeding, and they spoke together sympathetically, while Mary seemed a little more cordial than she had been since Maurice had left, and even promised to take over her work the following morning, and spend it with her friend.

"Yes, she is a different stamp of woman," remarked Lady Saville, as they drove away. "But how careworn she looks—and what a *corvée* her existence must have been. Good Heavens! how can you all live here—driven in upon each other, unable to go outside one's door without running against each other. You must be saints and angels not to be the deadliest

foes. Is it possible you can be content with such mutual imprisonment?"

"I know nothing beyond it," said Janet, a little startled by her companion's vehemence.

"Even so. But"— looking at her watch—"it is ten minutes to six. I must take you with me to the station, or I shall be too late for Randal. We will take you home after."

"No, thank you," returned Janet firmly. "I must stop here; I can walk home in twenty minutes, and I cannot be late for dinner."

"Oh, nonsense. Randal will be quite pleased to see you. Your father will not mind. I fancy you do pretty much what you like with him."

"No, indeed! and even if I could it would hurt me to vex him. I would rather say good-by here. I would indeed, Lady Saville."

And Lady Saville saw she was in earnest—rather to her surprise—so she brought her ponies to a stand and bade her young acquaintance a kindly good-by.

"Curious girl," she thought, as she whipped up her steeds, turning them in toward the railway. "I thought she would have jumped at the chance of meeting Randal, for she seemed to find him rather fascinating last week. She is not quite as transparent as I expected. There is something very taking about her, though."

Meantime Janet walked on rapidly, half surprised at her own resolution and almost regretting it. She certainly would have been sorry to vex her father by unpunctuality, but that was not the real source of her firmness. It was a sudden unaccountable fear of meeting Palliser; though, for more than a week, she had

wondered why he did not come, and wished to see him more than she cared to admit even to herself. Now when the chance was offered her, she shrank from availing herself of it; she was nervously afraid of seeming to throw herself in his way, and uneasily cautious about letting him perceive the curious mixture of attraction and repulsion he exercised upon her.

She was dreadfully annoyed within herself for this folly and weakness.

"Really, the result of it all is that I am less happy—that is, more uncomfortable, since we knew Mr. Palliser."

These self-communings brought her to the garden gate, and to her great surprise Barbara announced the extraordinary fact that Captain Rowley had not yet come in.

His almost invariable habit was to return home about a quarter to six, and change his morning coat for a rather smart smoking jacket; then he ensconced himself in an armchair in his dining room, and read some stiff book till dinner was put on the table, the book being usually a cover for a gentle and refreshing snooze—to be sure his spectacles were always wide awake and regarding the page before them with severe scrutiny.

On this occasion, however, Janet had time to put away her hat and mantle, and put on an old summer dress which constituted her dressing for dinner.

Before her "ancient mariner" returned evening had quite closed in, and the lamp was lit.

"Why, dearest dad, where have you been? Do you know, sir, that there is no more reprehensible habit

than unpunctuality, and you are quite half an hour behind time?"

"I am, indeed," he replied, laughing pleasantly, "I cry *peccavi*. Tell Barbara to bring in dinner. I will just sit down as I am. Where do you think I have been?"

"Oh, I have not the least idea."

"I'll tell you as soon as I have taken off the first sharp edge of hunger. What's this we have for dinner?"

"Some Béchamel of cod and stewed steak."

"Well, I hope to Heaven that girl hasn't hurried it first and let it simmer to rags after."

Having accomplished the feat of dulling the pangs of hunger, Captain Rowley pushed away his plate, and said.

"I was just coming out of the club when Lady Saville drove by, and though it was quite dusk she knew me in a moment, and pulled up sharp, right under the lamp. She gave me one of her sweet smiles and said, 'Ah, you have come at the right time! I shall take you as a hostage for your daughter, who has just deserted me. Come, Captain Rowley, I don't like driving to the station in the dark; you must take care of me,' and she went on to tell how she had had tea with you, and you had guided her round the town. By George, she is one of the sweetest women I ever met! Yet they say her husband does not get on with her. He must be a brute. So I got into the phaëton, and she drove away to the station. The train was full ten minutes or quarter of an hour late, and I'm glad I went with her, for there were a lot of roughs about

the station-yard. Palliser is a deuced well-bred young fellow. He thanked me most politely for taking care of his sister, and insisted on sending the groom back with the luggage and taking his seat, in order to give me a lift to the turn of the lane."

"They are both very nice," said Janet. "Lady Saville came in about half-past three, and we had a cup of tea together. It must be wonderful to be rich, as she is; to have only to wish for a thing and to get it, but a little monotonous."

"Rather a pleasant monotony," returned the father. "I am not greedy of money myself, but the monotony of always screwing and paring is more tiresome than the monotony of riches. Not, by the way, that the Savilles are rich. They were, but they have lived very fast. They say Sir Frederic's wish to shoot big game is to mask the necessity of shutting up his town and country house. I'm told that her ladyship knows how to scatter the cash, too. But what can you expect from a woman brought up without the least idea of the value of money?"

"I cannot fancy anyone in the world not understanding its importance," said Janet thoughtfully.

"Ah, my dear, that's because you have been pinched all your life, I am sorry to say. But it can't be helped. You see I must keep a few pounds together for Tom. I must give him a chance; a boy's career is more important than a girl's."

"Oh, yes, of course," cried Janet, laying her soft hand on the old man's wrinkled fist, as it lay loosely doubled on the table. "You need not trouble about me, dear dad. I have everything I want, and Tom

deserves to be helped, he is very steady; at the same time I should like to do something. I mean to earn a little money, not to take everything from you, or to be dependent on Tom by and by."

"Oh, don't think of these modern crotchets about independence. Women have a right to be provided for by the men. Some honest fellow will take a fancy to you one of these days, and then your future will be provided for in the most natural and satisfactory way."

"I cannot see the satisfaction of it," she returned, laughing; "a future that depends on some man's fancy is woefully indefinite. But I hope the best man I know will long be here to take care of me, and be taken care of. I am not going to worry about the future too soon."

For all answer the old sailor took and pressed the hand that lay upon his own, saying in a low tone, as if to himself, "Bless your dear heart."

This was the strongest display of feeling he ever permitted himself, and his daughter was perfectly content.

. . . . . .

When Palliser and his sister had deposited Captain Rowley within a couple of hundred yards of his own door they drove on for some time in silence.

Then Lady Saville said sweetly, "What sort of a time have you had at Morden Grange, Randal?"

"The sport was pretty good, but the company a choice selection of bores. Our old member was there, looking better than ever. By Jove, a man ought to be ashamed of stopping the way so long, and the wild Tory trash they all talked was amazing. I am as

strongly conservative as any of them, but one can no more resist the spirit of the age than one can beat back the rising tide. The only course is to lead, to manipulate the movement, instead of letting it crush you. If I ever get my innings, I shall pose as a Conservative Liberal."

"Why do you hang on, waiting to step into poor old Digby's shoes? There are heaps of towns and boroughs that would be ready enough to send you to Parliament."

"I don't want a town constituency that know too much, and want to drive, not be led. Besides, I want to identify myself with the old county, the old place. You do not know how intense the feeling is, and, above all, the desire to bury the memory of my contemptible, accursed folly under a mausoleum of good, strong work. Old Digby's wonderful vitality will, at any rate, give me time for sowing a fine crop of popularity."

Lady Saville listened to this and a good deal more, only throwing in a tactful word here and there. She was not quite as much at ease with her brother as with others, especially when alone with him. Then an invisible observer, had such a thing been possible, would have perceived something in her words and manner like "feeling her way" with the masterful master of Mervyn Hall.

Palliser spoke more to himself than to her, and she was pleased to let the current of the conversation drift as far as possible from herself.

It was quite dark when they reached the hall. The wide-open door let the bright lamplight stream out

upon the gravel sweep before the entrance, showing attendant spirits in the shape of a clerical-looking butler and two liveried satellites, who descended the steps to assist their employers in the difficult effort of alighting from the low carriage.

Palliser gathered up the various letters addressed to him which lay on the table in the large, square hall, and retired to make his toilet.

When he and his sister met at dinner, which was laid in a morning room less spacious than the great dining room, but still large and handsome, Lady Saville was dressed with great simplicity, though most becomingly, in gray silk with a little black lace on the corsage; her glossy black hair carefully arranged, but without ornament of any kind. Palliser looked at her very searchingly before he fell upon the good things set before him. Neither spoke much during dinner, and what they did say was upon the most ordinary topics.

The servants having left the room, Palliser filled his sister's glass and his own with old Château Margot and said, with a mocking smile:

"How have you disposed of your fine clothes, Gertrude? Sent them to your uncle's?"

Lady Saville laughed.

"Thanks to your generosity, Randal, I have kept the few I had, but preserve them for resuscitation and transformation in time of need. Really, sincerely, I am going to be most economical, even to dowdiness."

"I never saw you look better than in that gown, quakerlike though it is," he returned. "Yes, you are a pretty woman, unfortunately for yourself, Gertrude."

"I cannot see that it does me any harm," she said demurely.

There was a short pause. Then Palliser took a few nuts, cracked one, and asked dryly, "Who do you think was one of the party at Morden Grange?"

"Who?" asked his sister, and she grew a little white as she spoke.

"Farrer. He was to have left the day before, but they pressed him to stay for a dinner to meet me. I suppose he did not like to rouse attention by refusing. By Heaven, Gertrude, I wonder I ever forgave you for running the risk you did, and for such a cad."

"His caddishness is a matter of opinion," returned Lady Saville, with some spirit. "He was kind and helpful to me in a time of great trouble. You know what my life was, and you ought to be more merciful, Randal."

"Well, let the matter rest. I have stood by you as few brothers would have done; now is the time you must pay me back as far as you can."

"I am quite willing to do so," she returned wearily.

"Your running off to town as soon as my back was turned did not look like it. I wonder what took you there? But as there is no use in asking I shall waste no time on it."

"I have told you, Randal. You can believe or not, as you choose. As to your enjoinment, I don't think you need be uneasy. It will not be difficult to get all you want, without much chatter or scandal either."

"I am not sure. This is like all other small towns —a horribly gossiping place. Still the delight of falling in love, of feeling the thrill, the expectation,

is worth facing something. I have experienced a good deal in that line, but this is something more exquisite still."

"Men are fortunate in having one law for themselves and another for us in such matters," said Lady Saville, with a bitter laugh.

"It will be so to the end as it has been from the beginning," said her brother in a tone of dispassionate reflection.

There was a pause. Then Palliser said in a more genial tone:

"A little more wine, Gertrude?—half a glass? No? Look here, I am a bit of a brute to you, I know. But I have had enough to make me bitter. I never intend to turn against you, and the future may—indeed, I hope will be—brighter for you."

"Thank you, dear Randal. I am very tired. Will you excuse me if I go to my room?"

She rose, and passing him to the door, laid her hand on his head caressingly, but the smile which accompanied the gesture was not a pleasant one.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE HALL.

THIS visit of Lady Saville's to Navarino Cottage was the prelude of closer intercourse. As the October days grew shorter, and touches of frost crisped the air, deepening and heightening the rich autumnal tints on the falling leaves, few of them passed without a visit from the squire of Mervyn Hall, or his sister—and Janet began to surmount her uneasy admiration and vague distrust of the former.

The captain's territories were situated at the junction of Oak Tree Lane and the highroad before it entered the town; the growing intimacy between the cottage and the Hall did not therefore attract as much attention as if the Rowleys had lived the other side of Langford.

The Southshire hunting season had now begun, and Palliser, who was a keen sportsman, was out of doors as long as daylight lasted, and often longer.

"In fact I am alone nearly all day," said Lady Saville, one fine, sharp morning—she had come in before luncheon, as she occasionally did, and so found Captain Rowley at home. "I wish you would be 'real kind,' my dear sir, as the Americans say, and send me your daughter for a few days. In November there is to be a big party at the Hall—a man's party; so I am going to stay with my sister until it is over. Her hus-

band, General Dashwood, has a command at Aldershot. Then I return and stay till after Christmas. In the meantime I am bored and dull; do have compassion on me, Janet!" (She had grown familiar enough to call her by her Christian name.) "I have no greater temptation to offer than good fires, a large supply of novels from Mudie's, and complete freedom, for Randal starts off to-morrow to a friend's house in Norfolk."

"If my father does not mind, I shall be very pleased to stay with you," said Janet, sparkling all over with a happy smile. She had grown very fond of Lady Saville, whose caressing manners and flattering speech made her almost irresistible to a young, imaginative girl. "But you, too, will be lonely, dear dad, if I am away?"

"I shan't mind for a little while," he returned; "I know it will be a treat for you to stay with Lady Saville."

"Thank you, my dear Captain Rowley! And when my brother comes back (he will only be a few days away) you will also come to us."

"Thanks. Yes! Just to take this child home again."

"Well, Janet, will you come to-morrow? Randal will be driving in to catch the three train, and the carriage can call for you after."

"Thank you, Lady Saville, I shall be quite ready."

"Are you sure you do not mind being alone, dear?" asked Janet, slipping her arm through her father's when he returned from putting Lady Saville into her carriage.

"Who? Me? Not at all! I have a lot to do, regulating the garden and the conservatory for the

winter—besides my club work—I am on the committee now, and I am convinced there has been no end of peculation and mismanagement for the last couple of years! Don't you trouble about me, my pet; go and enjoy yourself. I am right glad you have a chance of being with a highbred woman like Lady Saville. It's a sort of education—not that I want you to imitate anyone, my dear, but she is a capital model and it will do you good to be with her!"

"Very well, dad; but I am afraid my manners will never be like Lady Saville's."

"They are not bad anyway." A pause, during which Captain Rowley seemed lost in thought—then he said, as if to himself, "He'll be away a fortnight at least, I fancy——"

"Who, father? Mr. Palliser?"

"Yes. I suppose he is going to Lord Dacre's. I am told there's a couple of very handsome daughters there, and I daresay, now he is a free man, he will want to give the Hall a suitable mistress. Of course, he'll look high for a wife."

"No doubt," said Janet, and turned away, leaving the room to give some direction to Barbara.

She was distressed to find what a pang her father's words struck to her heart. What he suggested was probable enough, and yet, if his suggestion proved prophetic, how would it be with herself?

In spite of all her efforts to be reasonable, to avoid construing Palliser's constant seeking for her society into anything beyond pleasant cordial friendliness, she knew that she would feel bitterly the sense of desertion and deception of the worst kind—self-deception.

Then words and looks which had made her eyes droop—her heart beat wildly—came back, and roused agitated doubts of the speaker's true meaning.

Even if Palliser ever dreamed of anything so romantic as marrying her, should she ever feel at rest and at home with him? She almost doubted it. How ardently she wished to break the disturbing spell he had thrown over her, and how profound would be her self-contempt, if she found she had given him the gold of passionate affection for the counters of pleasant passing admiration. How weak, how miserably weak, she had been! Well, in the future, she would be more worthy of her own respect! She wished her dear father were rich, or, at least, well off, and could take her away to some of the historical cities of the Continent, where in new scenes she would soon forget. "Surely," she thought, "it is more my fancy, my imagination, than my heart that is touched. I will not think of him any more."

Nor did she for half an hour, for Captain Rowley having gone out to attend a preliminary meeting of the committee appointed to inquire into the club finances, Janet instinctively sought distraction in writing to Maurice Winyard, whose first letter, now nearly two months old, she had not yet answered.

This accomplished, a sudden question arose to worry her. Would Mr. Palliser call to-morrow, on his way to the station, just to say good-by? It would not be an extraordinary piece of courtesy if he did, yet it would try her self-command severely. She was now determined to assume an aspect of pleasant friendliness, and suppress all tokens of shy, almost timid

pleasure in his society, which she had hitherto betrayed. Why should she treat him as a superior being? He was richer and more experienced than herself—he had a dominant air that affected her more physically than mentally, that was all; but it was a great deal. Yes, she almost hoped he would not come, yet she would be greatly disappointed if he did not.

It was quite a relief when Captain Rowley came in to luncheon, full of the financial iniquities already scented by the committee, and a little elated by the sense of his own superior sense and practicality as compared with his committee mates.

"They have chosen old Dobson, because he was a lawyer before he came into money and retired from business. By George, he is a regular timber-head! and in such a taking about the responsibility devolving on him that he is no use at all. I wish Palliser—Richard Palliser, I mean—had come on the committee. He knows what he's about; but he is too big a man to be troubled about such trifles as a paltry provincial club. His private room in the bank is club enough for him!"

"You must keep them right, dad," said Janet; "and now tell me what you are going to do this afternoon."

"Well, I don't exactly know. I'm told they are to sell off most of the garden and farming tools at poor Bennett's on Monday; there's to be a division of the property between the sons and the stepmother. I'd like to pick up a grass cutter if there's such a thing to be had cheap. I could do the grass myself then, and

it runs away with a deuced lot of money hiring a mower every week or two."

"Let me go with you, then, I want a walk—a walk with you, dearest dad. Coming back I must stop at the vicarage, and tell Mary about Lady Saville's invitation. She will look after my two particular old women for me while I am away."

"I shouldn't mind going to see them myself, if you wish it."

"I am afraid you would frighten them. You know you sometimes have a rather gruff, quarter-deck manner," returned Janet, shaking her head.

"You are as saucy a monkey as ever tormented an old salt. Come along. It is a splendid fresh afternoon. Put on your hat, and we'll see what we can pick up at Bennett's."

. . . . . .

The next morning was fine also, but colder, with more wind, and in spite of her stern resolution, Janet felt nervously alive to every sound, as the hour at which the London express was due approached. Two o'clock! If Palliser was going to call he must come soon. Half-past two! Janet hastily put on her second best frock, which she intended to wear every day while at the Hall, and as hastily recommenced her not very extensive packing. Twenty minutes to three! There was hardly any chance of seeing him now—it would only be "a grasp of the hand, hastening on," if he did come. Quarter to three! Janet's hurry ceased, and she finished her arrangements with almost sad tranquillity. At half-past three the brougham from the Hall drew up at the door; the

attendant groom sent in a message that he feared the carriage was late, but her ladyship had given the coachman some commissions to do in the town. With these words, the functionary in topboots handed in a brace of plump partridges, with "Mr. Palliser's compliments."

Janet bade her father an effusive farewell. At the moment she felt strangely reluctant to leave him, but he seemed so content at her going that she told herself she was silly and sentimental—with which conviction she drove off.

Lady Saville came into the hall to receive her young guest, and conducted her upstairs to her private sitting room, where tea was ready.

What a charming house it was, thought Janet; everything in it was more or less beautiful. It looked as if the owners and occupiers were lifted high above every sordid and degrading want; elegance and nobility must dwell within its walls, and happiness in its daily life. Yet Lady Saville looked neither well nor happy.

"So glad you have come, dear child! I have felt unspeakably desolate since Randal left this morning."

"I dare say you have, Lady Saville. He is so bright and amusing you must miss him."

"Poor fellow! It is something new for him, and you know men are seldom bright with their own people at home. Now, let us have some tea. Then we shall have light enough for a walk, and get up an appetite for dinner. You are a great walker, are you not, Janet?"

"I am afraid I am not great at anything, but I walk a good deal with my father."

"That is probably the reason you look in such enviable health. I will try and walk while you are here. Perhaps I may reap a similar reward."

"You are not looking very well, Lady Saville," looking at her with affectionate interest.

"I often have nervous headaches. Everyone has their own worries, but I shall feel better now you are here. Randal had a lot of letters to write. He is thinking of selling a place he has on the Sussex coast. It is a seaside villa, a nice enough place, only *he* has unpleasant associations with it. This entails no end of lawyer's letters. He is going to stay in town a day on account of it."

"Is there to be a large party where he is going?"

"Yes. I fancy there will be a good many in the house. It is a semi-political gathering which is my brother's real attraction, though Lord Dacre has rather fascinating daughters; but Randal has not been very much inclined for ladies' society of late years. I am thankful he is taking it up again. It is rather bad for a man to be disgusted with women!"

"It is a little unjust to be disgusted with women because two or three are bad. Is it not?"

"Of course it is. But do you imagine that men are just? That is the rarest quality among them."

"Are women more just?"

"I do not know; I do not fancy they are."

"What an unfortunate world, if there is no justice either in men or women."

"It sounds very bad, doesn't it?" said Lady Saville,

"but I am afraid there is not much justice! Now, if you will not take any more tea, we will go out. I think we may manage to go as far as the home farm and back, but first come and see your room."

It was a large sunny apartment hung with pale apple green chintz, covered with roses and deeper green leaves. The furniture was inlaid with various woods, and had brass handles and ornaments to the drawers and cabinets. There were easy-chairs, a sofa, a dwarf bookcase, a writing table with all the necessary appliances, an over-mantel with china vases and biscuit figures—in short, enough pretty things to make any drawing room look lovely, Janet thought, as she looked round.

"Give Collins, my maid, your keys, and she will put out your things," said Lady Saville.

Janet laughed. "I shall feel ashamed to put so grand a room to so common a use as to sleep in it," she replied. "My poor little box looks quite lost. Thank you, Lady Saville, I prefer unpacking my own belongings. I am never long in dressing, and there will be quite time enough to unpack and dress when we come in. You ought to have put me in less splendid quarters."

"Why, my dear child? It is light and airy, but nothing remarkable otherwise! The view is pretty," opening the window. "It is the same as from the drawing room—only better, from being at a higher level. This used to be my eldest sister's room, and my sitting room was the schoolroom. Good Heavens! What ages seem to have passed between those bygone days and the present! I sometimes wonder if I can be

the same creature I was then. No! I cannot believe I am. Is it not well the future is hidden from us?"

"Perhaps so," returned Janet. "Yet I often long to peep behind the veil."

"Don't try!" said Lady Saville emphatically.

At the outset of their walking Lady Saville seemed preoccupied; usually, though not talkative, she was brightly alive to what was going on, and ready to throw in opportune observations, here and there, phrases which often sounded witty, if they were not so really—the result of long social training. Janet therefore tried to talk more than she did generally, to cover her companion's silence.

Gradually Lady Saville came back to the present, and they discussed many things as they walked briskly along through the grounds, passing a gate leading out into the woods, where they trod on the brown-red, rustling leaves, as they followed the path winding through them under nearly bare branches, and listened to the rare note of some lingering bird which had not yet realized that summer was quite gone. Sometimes their steps startled a pheasant, who rose with a "whir," and disappeared, his plumage gleaming through the black stems of the trees.

"I suppose you can ride?"

"I am not sure," returned Janet. "I can ride the old pony at the vicarage, even without a saddle; but he is so quiet."

"Would you like to ride?"

"Oh, yes, immensely."

"I shall inquire if there is anything safe and fit to carry you in the stables. Then, if I happen to have a

spare habit here, I can give you a lesson. I do not imagine you know that I am a good horsewoman. I used to love riding."

"Don't you care about it now?"

"I suppose I do not enjoy anything so much now; but I am frightfully in the blues, my dear Janet. You will be sorry you came here—it has been fearfully dull! Let us do something to rouse ourselves—though we have not the means to be gay. Shall we ride to-morrow?"

"I should like it, Lady Saville—but you see I have no habit."

"Ah! I will ask Collins if she has both mine here, and then I must interview old Roger, the head groom. I hardly know what they have in the stables now."

"But perhaps Mr. Palliser might not like me to ride one of his horses?"

"Who? Randal? He would be very pleased. I don't think we need have any fears on that score."

They had now cleared the wood and came out on the open plain, where the plow was at work turning up the rich dark loam. Here were the buildings of the home farm, its stack yards and fowl yards. The pleasant evening sounds, the lowing of the home-coming cattle, the bark of a watch-dog, the cackle of a flock of geese, the occasional scream of the guinea fowl, and the tramp of heavy cart-horses being led to their stables—it was all charming to Janet. The wind had fallen and the evening was fresh and clear.

"We had better not stay here too long," said Lady Saville, seeing that her companion was inclined to

linger. "It will be quite dark by the time we get home. You enjoy this sort of thing, Janet?"

"Yes, greatly. The air is delicious."

"I suppose you would like to have such a place yourself?"

"Oh, no! It would alarm me to possess so much. A far smaller place would please me quite as well—and a little more money than we have. I could always come here and enjoy the beauty just as much as if it belonged to me—perhaps more, because I should have no responsibility."

Lady Saville looked at her keenly.

"I am not quite of your way of thinking," she said. "I grow dreadfully bored in the country. When one comes to my age, society is very essential."

"But, Lady Saville, you seem scarcely older than myself!" cried Janet.

"Thank you! But I have one boy on the point of going to a crammer's, and another two years younger," said Lady Saville, laughing. "No, give me London or Paris, or some continental watering place. You cannot have society in the country unless you import it from the great centers; and then, being shut up in the same house with it—it becomes wearisome! How much you would enjoy London, Janet!"

"I have no doubt I should."

A pause—then Lady Saville asked, "Do you play billiards?"

"No, not at all."

"Would you like to learn to-night?"

"Of course I should, but I am very stupid at games."

"There is nothing especially difficult in billiards.

Then, if we can manage it, we will ride after luncheon to-morrow. I daresay some of the Castle Clare people will come over to-morrow, perhaps to luncheon; but you would rather not have any strange men with you on your experimental ride?"

"Never mind me, Lady Saville; go and ride with your friends. I have more than enough to amuse me for days in that beautiful library."

"We shall manage better than that."

This was Janet's first glimpse of the restlessness which overtakes most women who have exhausted all the world can give before they are six-and-thirty, and whose lives are hollow because their hearts are not receptive. She began to perceive that her new friend, in spite of the sparkling gayety she could assume at a moment's notice, was anything but a happy woman. Still, for some reason, she made herself most agreeable to her young guest, and Janet found a lesson in billiards a very pleasant way of passing the evening.

The game interested her more than she expected. "Games," to her meant cards, which she detested; but the movement and the physical enjoyment of sending the balls into the pockets was almost equal to lawn tennis.

Next day two men from Castle Clare rode over to luncheon. One was a second son, a young guardsman, the other a London chum of his and his guest.

They talked about people, things, and places totally unknown to Janet, of whom they did not take the slightest notice, while their attention to and admiration of Lady Saville were great and unmistakable.

Finally they persuaded her to ride with them.

Janet, when Lady Saville turned to her with a laughing apology, so eagerly assured her that she did not mind being left alone, so long as the library was also left, that her hostess went off to dress quite satisfied that she had not been guilty of objectionable neglect.

"Will you not stay and entertain my cavaliers?" asked Lady Saville, finding Janet at her heels when she had left the room.

"No, thank you, I would rather not, and I am sure they would rather not. I shall take a ramble in the grounds, and then have a good long read till you come back; and do not return sooner than you like. I do not mind being alone."

"You are really a delightful girl," cried Lady Saville, bestowing a kiss upon her. "You seem to me absolutely honest. Now I shall not forget to find out if I have a habit for you, and we shall have our trial trip to-morrow."

Lady Saville was as good as her word, and Janet had the joy of riding a well-broken steady horse, quiet, yet willing, on the following day; moreover, the old head groom declared the young lady had the making of a good horsewoman, and that it came natural to her to "sit square."

The days flew past, Lady Saville grew more and more kindly as she perceived that her guest was able and willing to amuse herself independently of all extraneous aid. They paid frequent visits to Captain Rowley, and he often came to luncheon, which he said suited him better than dinner.

"I can settle down with my book in my chair at home when I am tired after the day, and turn in as

soon as I feel drowsy; whereas, if I have to sit up and make conversation, I am played out in no time," he explained to Lady Saville, who was always quite charming to the old man, to do her justice. She considered no one too insignificant to be fascinated, down to the crossing sweeper to whom she threw a penny.

Janet had now been ten days at the Hall, and began to think she had left her father long enough; but Lady Saville would not hear of her returning home. "You must not desert me," she exclaimed. "Randal has been kept in town longer than he expected, but he will be at home certainly some day next week; do stay till he comes," and Janet consented.

She was willing and unwilling to remain. It would be pleasant and exciting to be in the same house with Palliser, and she admitted to herself that she would like him to see how well Lady Saville's old habit suited her—though just a little too tight, for her ladyship was *petite*—but coming back as he would be from a house of beautifully dressed elegant people, well versed in the "shibboleths" of *his* world—how could she expect that he would notice her much? She must keep her father's warning in her mind.

For some cause, utterly unknown to her, Mr. Palliser seemed to take an interest in her, but it was highly improbable that this would last; and she was too proud, too self-respecting to give more than was given. No! She would not stay on, once the master of the house was at home. Another reason actuated her, which some may be high-minded enough to consider a puerile one. The writer has not reached this high altitude, but entirely sympathizes with the heroine.

She had worn her scanty store of frocks over and over again. Should Mr. Palliser invite people to dinner, she had nothing new or suitable to put on. This was what she candidly told Lady Saville when her pleasant hostess urged her to come to a dinner to which she herself had been engaged for some time and did not like to put off, and to which she wished to take Janet.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Saville, on hearing of this difficulty, "let us run up to town for a couple of days and get you a pretty dinner dress. It will be a pleasant break. Our house is unoccupied, but we have a caretaker there who can do what we want."

"But dear Lady Saville, I could not ask my father for a new dress until after Christmas."

"After Christmas!" interrupted Lady Saville. "That will just do, for of course three months' credit is ready money."

"My dear dad would not think so," said Janet, laughing. "He never leaves anything unpaid at the week end."

"How dreadfully he must cripple himself," cried Lady Saville, in much surprise. "Well, then, you need say nothing about it till the period when the new garment is due; then present the bill."

"That is the greatest impossibility of all. I don't think dad and I ever had a secret from each other in our lives. Then, as to a new frock, we consult over it for a month before it is bought."

Lady Saville laughed, as if much amused.

"Yet there is very little of the man-milliner about Captain Rowley."

"Oh, he only listens, and agrees to all I say. I

enjoy talking about it and anticipating." So the project was given up, and Lady Saville refused some other invitations in consequence.

The dinner in question was rather a state affair at the Castle—there was but one "Castle" in Southshire —and it was rather a state function. Lady Saville put on her diamonds and a grand court dress, only docked of its train.

It was a fête to Janet to study her friend's toilet, to gaze with genuine admiration on the graceful, queenly look of the little woman who was every inch a great lady.

Lady Saville was much gratified, even while she said to herself, "What a child she is! She is born to be taken in; she will never profit by any of her advantages. Heigho! what would the world be like were it full of Janet Rowleys? Very peaceful, but rather flat; anything would be better, though, than what it is now." So thinking, she kissed her guest and departed.

Janet had entreated to be spared the formalities of dinner by herself, so high tea was served to her in Lady Saville's sitting room as soon as that lady had set out on her six-mile drive to dinner, and having dispatched what refreshment she needed, she curled herself up in a corner of the sofa with a book, a grand fire of wood and coal shedding a glow over the prettily decorated room. A lamp with a pink-and-white shade stood near her, and shed a becoming light over Janet's fair hair, beautiful complexion, and best summer dress of white muslin with blue ribbons, which, though but the work of a Langford artist, suited her

well. This room was at the back of the house, and no ordinary sounds from the front reached the ears of those occupying it.

The night was clear and cold with the breath of coming winter, and Janet had to resist an inclination to gaze at the fire and dream, instead of attending to the page before her. But she did resist stoutly, and had just succeeded in fixing her mind on her book, when the door opened, and, to her astonishment, Palliser walked in, looking bright and smiling, with a gleam of exultation in his dark eyes.

Janet started to her feet, feeling half frightened and wholly dazed.

"Mr. Palliser!" she exclaimed, and then stood still and silent, the vivid color fading from her cheek.

"Good-evening," he said, advancing with outstretched hand. "I fear I have rather a ghostly appearance, for you look 'skeered,' as the country people say."

"Well, I am," replied Janet, laughing and rallying from her start, while she left her hand in his grasp. "Lady Saville did not expect you till next week."

"Lady Saville knew nothing about my intentions—which were to come home as fast as I could—and I should have been here two days ago but for some law matters—infernal nuisance the law is!" Janet had moved to the fire-place, where Palliser followed, his eyes dwelling on her with an expression of delight that made it hard for her to keep up the calm, friendly tone she strove to assume.

"So Lady Saville is dining at Castle Clare?" he said. "How charming to find you here to welcome me, in-

stead of a depressing silence. You see I venture to take for granted that you do welcome me?"

"Yes, of course I do—to your own house."

"It was not very considerate of my sister to leave you alone."

"She wished me to go with her, but I preferred staying here. I do not mind being alone in the least."

"The stars in their courses fought for me!" exclaimed Palliser, smiling. "I am afraid you have had rather a dull time of it. Now tell me—have you dined?"

"Oh, yes. Long ago!"

"Then you are ready for another dinner, and the dinner will be ready for us in half an hour—by the time I make myself fit to sit down with you. I trust you have not bored yourself very much during your abode in my old place?"

"No, indeed! I have been very happy. Lady Saville is delightful."

"I suspect that the light which surrounds you is all from within," said Palliser, as he went to the door. "I shall not keep you long."

Janet continued to stand by the fire when he left the room, her heart still beating almost painfully fast. She must not allow herself to be so disturbed by so simple an incident as Palliser's unexpected return to his own house. She must not let him see the extraordinary effect he produced upon her. Surely she was strong enough to present a steady front to the—was he friend or foe?

She did not know why, but his eyes always seemed to her like danger signals. She felt she dared not let

herself love him, yet was not that question already decided? At any rate, a whole evening's *tête-à-tête* with him lay before her, and it was a fearful joy.

As she thought, her agitation diminished, her pulse grew more quiet, and she took up her book again with the hope of acquitting herself like a woman.

So engrossed was she in the effort to marshal her moral and mental forces in battle array that Palliser seemed to have been but a few minutes making his toilet. Yet how perfect it was. What a distinguished looking man—how his whole air and countenance bespoke frank pleasure—pleasure at seeing her! But Janet was quite herself again.

"And how is Captain Rowley?" asked Palliser, taking his stand on the hearthrug.

Janet had subsided into a low armchair.

"Very well indeed."

"Why did he not join you here?"

"I don't know exactly, but I think he does not care to leave home when I am away. He is fond of working about the house and the garden, so——"

"Dinner is on the table," announced the butler, opening the door wide.

Palliser offered his arm to his guest.

"I really have dined, Mr. Palliser," said Janet, hesitating.

"What! would you treat me so scurvily as to let me eat alone?"

"Very well, I will come and look at you," she returned, smiling—and they descended the wide stair together. How strange it seemed to her, yet the feeling of awkwardness was wearing off already.

Dinner was laid, as was usual when there were no guests, in the breakfast or morning room, and Janet saw with surprise how complete in all respects was the repast so quickly prepared. "What magic there is in money!" she thought.

"And how have you amused yourself?" asked Palliser at last, having done most of the talking up to this question, and persuaded his companion to keep him in countenance by tasting some of the good things before her.

"I have been abundantly amused. There was that lovely library in the morning, till Lady Saville appeared, then we talked, and drove or walked, and my dear father came to luncheon sometimes, and I have been bold enough to ride or try to ride one of your horses—such a delightful horse! Lady Saville has been giving me lessons as to holding my reins, and many other things. Then, in the evening, she sang sometimes, and has been so kind as to teach me how to play billiards. I find the game less tiresome than I expected."

"Ah, I heard of the riding, but not of the billiard playing. If you are so disposed, we'll have a game after dinner."

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Janet, with some hesitation, "but I am afraid you will find me rather a bore—I am so unpracticed."

"I shall find you—an all-conquering antagonist," returned Palliser, covering the warmth of his tone with a laugh. "Come, Miss Rowley, you must drink one glass of Johannisberg with me, or I shall believe you are annoyed at my return."

"Why should I be? I am sure we—are very pleased to see you back."

"Really?" said Palliser, looking into her eyes as he filled her glass, which she scarcely tasted.

Then he dexterously led the conversation to more impersonal topics, which was a relief to Janet. Presently she asked:

"How did you manage to arrive here when you did? There is no down train stops at Langford after 6.30, and that would have brought you here before Lady Saville left."

"Exactly. I missed the train in London, so I took the 4.20 to Greybridge—you know that line is shorter—then I had a very tedious drive, nearly seven miles you know, with the most miserable old brute of a horse I ever sat behind. In fact, I was seized with a most extraordinary fit of homesickness and was determined to reach the Hall to-night at any cost."

"Ah, yes, I understand. I am always glad to go home," said Janet in a low tone, not knowing exactly what to say.

There was a pause; then Palliser added, "You must remember that I have not known what home is for years."

Janet made no answer, every phrase that suggested itself seeming unsuitable.

"Now," said her host, in an altered tone, "shall we try our respective skill at billiards—that is, if you will not take any more wine? Why, you have not finished what you have. I am afraid it is not good."

"I have no doubt it is excellent, but I do not like it very much. I rarely taste wine, and do not know

good from bad. It has generally rather a disagreeable taste, I think."

"That is an unusual view of the matter. Come, Miss Rowley, I am anxious to see what you can do."

Ringing, he ordered the servant, who came instantly, to light the billiard room.

When Janet found herself in that well-appointed apartment, with her fascinating host chalking her cue, setting the balls, and arranging all preliminaries with eager attention, her sense of humor—the contrast between her insignificance in the social gatherings at Langford, and her importance—even if temporary—in one of the first houses of the county—touched her fancy, and catching Palliser's eye, she laughed a low but merry laugh.

"What amuses you?" he asked.

"To be here playing billiards with you seems very funny," she returned, smiles still dimpling round her lips.

Palliser paused in the act of making a stroke, and repeated, "Funny? I find it heavenly."

"Ah, Mr. Palliser, that is too much; please attend to your game." She began to be sufficiently at home with him to be a little coquetish.

"Believe me," he said, in a significant tone, "I am attending to my game very diligently."

Then he proceeded to explain and exemplify many mysteries, and seemed determined to keep away from any tempting subjects or illusions. Janet enjoyed her lesson extremely, growing more and more at her ease with him, and therefore doing herself more justice. At last she looked at the clock. "Half-past eleven!"

she cried; "I had no idea it was so late. I must say good-night."

"No, no! Not yet. Wait till my sister comes, and we shall hear some of the brilliant sayings exchanged at dinner." Then, coming round to lounge against the table beside her, "I think you have improved already under my tuition. If you care to play the game and like it, you may become a high-class player."

"Thank you very much for your lesson. I should like to play well——"

"I will not say 'thank you' for your lesson yet, until I know what result it brings forth, but you—you have taught me a good deal."

"Then we are quits, I suppose," said Janet, but her lips trembled as she said the words, and she wished to be away, anywhere, even while a strange thrill of pleasure ran through her veins, when the door opened gently, and Lady Saville came in all smiles and diamonds.

Janet could have kissed her with joy.

"My dear Randal, this is an unexpected pleasure!"

CHAPTER VI.

AN IMPORTANT DECISION.

LADY SAVILLE was a good deal amused by the eagerness of Janet's welcome. "Randal has not been keeping himself well in hand," she thought. "I wonder if he understands what a shy bird it is."

Then she began to describe her evening at the Castle, and to ask questions respecting the party with which her brother had been staying in Norfolk.

Janet said little, and soon begged leave to retire.

"Miss Rowley has been dying to go to bed for the last hour," said Palliser, "though she has been playing splendidly! I only persuaded her to stay by suggesting the desirability of seeing you on your return."

"You know Janet has been accustomed to early hours; we must not pale her roses, by keeping her up! Good-night, dear! You shall hear the rest of the news to-morrow."

"Good-night, Mr. Palliser. Thank you for your lessons," said Janet.

He opened the door for her, and held her hand, perhaps an unnecessary instant, before she escaped. Then he returned to his sister, and threw himself into a chair, beside the fire, in silence.

"This is an unexpected move of yours, Randal," said Lady Saville, after waiting for him to speak.

"Yes," he returned, "as unexpected to myself as to

anyone else. Your letters have been very full and satisfactory, but this morning I was seized with such an overpowering desire to come and see for myself that—I came!"

"Randal, you amaze me!" she exclaimed, with a touch of malice in her tone. "I thought your next marriage was to be arranged on the most prudential and hygienic principles—and behold——"

"Well, I think I have fulfilled all such conditions," he interrupted. "If friendly fate has thrown in a handful of sweeter ingredients, why, I think, after my experience, I have a right to all the enjoyment I can get; but you are too bitter a skeptic"—he paused a moment and then continued—"I had a long talk with old Pearson about St. Oswald's. I don't think it will fetch as much as I expected. He says if the place had been on the Devonshire coast I might have asked a higher price, and a lot more rot. However, he will do the best he can. I spoke about your house in Eaton Square, he thinks it will let well for the season. I suppose you don't care to let it before Christmas."

Brother and sister talked at some length of their respective affairs, Palliser's last words being, "Send a note to Captain Rowley to-morrow early. Ask him to dine and sleep and have a little shooting on Thursday and Friday, if he will stay so long. He is a rugged old fellow, but a gentleman, and comes of a good stock."

. . . . . .

If the days flew fast when Lady Saville and Janet were alone together, they went still faster when the master of the house was at home.

He undertook both the riding lessons and the billiard lessons; in the former Lady Saville joined.

Captain Rowley came to stay for two or three days, which were particularly delightful to Janet. She had never seen him so bright, and even exhilarated; he seemed to enjoy his visit thoroughly, and Palliser's attentions and kindly care of him irresistibly attracted the daughter's heart.

The old man was very proud of his prowess in shooting, and Palliser was particular about having the birds forwarded to the vicarage, labeled, "Shot by Captain Rowley."

The old sailor himself was a little surprised at the number which bore this inscription.

The time was now close at hand when the guests expected by Palliser were to assemble. Janet, therefore made up her mind to return home with her father. He would feel terribly lonely, too, after the brightness of his stay at the Hall.

Neither Lady Saville nor Palliser would hear of this.

"My dear child!" cried the former, when Janet suggested leaving on the following day. "What an idea! Are you so faithless as to leave me during the last days of my stay here? I am sure, Captain Rowley, you will spare her to me for a week longer?"

"I don't think I am likely to say you nay, Lady Saville."

"But I am sure my father will feel being quite alone, after his delightful visit here," and Janet glanced gratefully at Palliser. "I shall feel happier to be with him."

"I am equally sure that Captain Rowley will be unselfish enough to bear his self-imposed loneliness

for a week," said the host. "Why will he not give us another week himself?"

"Because I have stayed already four days, instead of one, and I shouldn't be surprised if I found my house burned down, or all the crockery smashed, when I go back. But you, Janet, you are welcome to stay. I know it's a treat you don't often get."

"And," added Palliser, "you require just six lessons more to make you perfect in the witching art of horsemanship."

"Which art you will probably never exercise again. Nevertheless, learn all you can," said Captain Rowley, laughing.

After some further persuasion, Janet agreed to remain.

In truth, she had never been so happy and at ease with Palliser as during her father's visit to the Hall. She had rarely been alone with her host, and his manner to her had been more friendly and less like that of an admirer.

The result was that she looked forward with something like dismay to the time—now so near at hand—when she should no longer see him the first thing in the morning and the last at night.

How foolish she was! But there would be time enough to fight the matter out when she was at home and alone; for the present, let her—oh, let her enjoy!

The following day was wet and gusty. Palliser ordered the brougham and accompanied Captain Rowley home himself.

Lady Saville and Janet were at tea in the smaller of the two drawing rooms, and evening was fast closing in

when Palliser returned. To his great disgust, he found Mrs. Richard Palliser, a plump, comely dame, and her daughter established at his sister's tea table.

Mrs. R. Palliser was a somewhat irrepressible woman, perfectly satisfied with herself, her house, her husband, her position, and quite willing to be friendly with the Hall, in spite of the severe course of snubbing to which her husband's kinsman had treated her. She was busy explaining why she had not called on Lady Saville before.

"You see we went to Vichy immediately after you came, and then Minnie and I went on to Switzerland. Now we are going to Yorkshire for a fortnight—in fact, my son is engaged to be married to a very charming girl, Miss Constable; who, besides being a sweet creature, has a very nice fortune!"

"A fortune is always nice," said Lady Saville blandly.

"That is just what I say," returned Mrs. R. Palliser. "I am the last person in the world to set much value on wealth, still one must be glad where a young couple have a fair start."

"No doubt," observed Palliser, who managed to hold himself most politely aloof.

"I don't suppose the marriage will come off before the new year," etc., etc., etc., she continued to babble on to Lady Saville.

Palliser took his cup, and brought it over to Janet's side, drawing a seat near her.

"Well," he said, in a low, caressing voice, "I saw the dear dad safely installed. I am glad to say the house is intact—also the crockery, as far as I could see.

Your neat little damsel seemed pleased to welcome her master back. Your father found quite a respectable lot of letters, which will no doubt occupy him this evening. By the way he gave me one for you," taking it from his pocket and handing it to her.

"Oh, thank you! It is from Tom—from my brother," exclaimed Janet, smiling and coloring with the flitting blush which betrayed her emotional nature, Palliser thought, so delightfully.

"I am so much obliged to you for seeing dear dad home."

"Are you?" said Palliser, looking into her eyes. "You are often good enough to say, 'I am so much obliged to you.' Are you not afraid you are storing up a terrible reckoning, and may beggar yourself when I demand payment?"

"No; you are too generous for that," smiling upon him.

"Do not be too sure. Suppose I tell you what my demand will be?"

"Very well. Only no one can give more than they possess."

"No doubt we could come to terms," he returned, with a lingering glance; then, lowering his voice still more, he asked,

"How long is that dreadful woman going to stay?"

"How can I tell?" whispered Janet—"don't you like her? I never did."

"Glad to hear it. Is that another secret?"

Here the visitors rose to take leave. "Are you staying here?" asked the elder lady as she shook hands with Janet.

"I am."

"I was going to ask if I could take you home. Very nice for you, I am sure."

"Quite delightful," returned Janet joyously.

"Your father will feel very lonely without you."

"He only left to-day himself."

"Oh, indeed; well, good-morning, Mr. Palliser."

"Allow me to see you to your carriage," he said, with icy politeness, and followed them from the room.

"Why does Mr. Palliser dislike Mrs. Richard so much?" asked Janet, moving to a seat near Lady Saville.

"Do you like her?" was the counter-question.

"No—that is, it gives me no pleasure to meet her, but Mr. Palliser seems to find her insupportable."

"Randal is a good hater. Then the poor woman offends his taste, which is an unpardonable sin; besides, her husband is his next heir, and the son after him."

"Does that annoy Mr. Palliser?"

"You know very little of my brother if you ask such a question," returned Lady Saville, laughing.

"Of course I scarcely know him," said Janet thoughtfully. "Is he a complicated character?"

Lady Saville laughed again.

"I can hardly say. I only know he is a very good brother."

"I am sure he is," replied Janet, and then fell into deep thought. Yes, he was kind and generous, and quite fond of the dear dad. How well he seemed to understand and appreciate him—and how dull life

would be without her delightful host when she returned to Navarino Cottage.

But the dear old father must see nothing of this when she did go back. At any rate there were three or four days more of her present blissful life remaining; then Lady Saville was going, and there would be an end of all things.

"You are a very unguarded person, Randal," Lady Saville was saying when Janet came out of "reverie land." "Janet has been asking me why you dislike the banker's wife so much?"

"I shall never dream of being guarded with Miss Rowley," he returned. "Besides we have exchanged confidence. She does not fancy Mrs. 'Ingot' any more than I do! Do you think that young Richard's fiancée is one of the Constables of Cliffe, Gertrude?" he continued, addressing his sister.

"Yes, I imagine she is."

"Great luck for him! I wonder if any hopes of the Mervyn property have been used to bait the hook, eh?"

"Oh, no! Not now."

Palliser stood meditatively leaning against the end of the mantelpiece for a moment, then he asked.

"Isn't Corbyn and old Fitzherbert coming over to dinner?"

"Yes. I asked them to stay the night, but dear old Fitz is starting for the ends of the earth to-morrow; so they must go back to Braybrook."

"Ah!" returned her brother, "if you have gauds, prepare to wear them now!"

"Not 'gauds,' my dear Randal," said Lady Saville, laughing; "severe simplicity would do better."

"You must know, Miss Rowley," resumed Palliser, "that Colonel Fitzherbert is the last of the dandies—the real old full-flavored dandy—who will swear you a sounding oath, and drink you a bottle of port, and who is moreover a past-master, I should say critic, of beauty and style and all the other thistle-down ingredients which go to make up social success. You must fascinate him or you will lose caste forever."

"Now do not make her nervous and uncomfortable," said Lady Saville. "Do not mind him, Janet."

"I assure you I am not in the least uneasy, Lady Saville. I shall never see Colonel Fitzherbert again probably, and his judgment does not concern me. I hope I may not give him an unpleasant shock. I will do my best not to offend his eyes or ears," said Janet, laughing good-humoredly, "but I do not care for his verdict!"

"And you need not fear it," said Palliser, looking at her thoughtfully, "your spirit will master his."

"Well, I am tired and have a little headache—I rather think I have taken a chill. I will go and lie down," put in Lady Saville.

"And I will come with you," said Janet hastily, seeing her friend rise.

"And who will give me another cup of tea?" asked Palliser—but Janet was at the door and passed through it before Lady Saville could answer.

"There," she said, turning back with a smile, and pouring out the desired cup. "You shall have this at least."

Palliser took it, looking rather blank as he did so,

then with a laugh remarked: "Deferred does not mean defeated."

The two guests that evening were well-trained society men—the younger a landed proprietor in the neighborhood; the elder, a more than elderly gentleman, with a red face, a jet black wig and whiskers, and a somewhat alarming range of very white teeth; he wore an eyeglass, and stared somewhat steadily at Janet, with an expression which seemed to say "Where on earth have you come from?" But "forewarned is forearmed," and Janet bore his scrutiny with great composure—moreover she felt that Palliser was watching her, but in a fashion that gave her a sense of being potently backed up.

There was much talk at dinner which was Greek to her. Some abstract good stories, however, were told, which she took in and enjoyed.

When the gentlemen joined Lady Saville and her guest the whole party adjourned to the billiard room, where Palliser asked Janet to play, but she whispered a request to be left out of the game, which resolved itself into a match between Lady Saville and Mr. Corbyn—the host marking.

Presently the colonel approached her.

"Are you from Derbyshire?" he asked. "I knew some Rowleys from that part of the world."

"Yes, my father's family are Derbyshire people!"

"I remember knowing a young fellow of that name who was second lieutenant of the troopship that took my regiment out to Bombay, in eighteen hundred and—no, by George! I won't give you chapter and verse."

"Then will you give me the name of the ship?" said Janet, and she looked with a bright smile into the old beau's face.

"Not easy to say *you* no! Let me see, it was the *Golconda*."

"Then it *was* my father," she exclaimed, with sudden interest. "I know he served on board that ship."

"Small place this world; I suppose Rowley has left the service like myself! What is he doing now?"

"We live here—in Langford I mean. He is very well, and still quite active."

"Ha! and looks younger than I do, hey?"

"Oh, no!" returned Janet, gazing at his abundant wig, and the generally "florid Gothic" of his appearance. "He is not a bit like you! Then you must remember he has a great daughter to take care of."

"Gad! you ought to grind him young if anything would. How is it I have never seen you in town?—not been presented yet?"

"No, not yet," returned Janet, shaking her head solemnly.

"What! he keeps you mewed up? What an infernal shame. If I were staying on here, I'd call and remonstrate, by Jove, I would. You get our little friend, Lady Saville, to present you next spring; couldn't have a better social sponsor. Hey, Palliser, I'm going to depute you to act for me, and read my old acquaintance, Rowley, a lecture on the iniquity of his conduct in shutting up his daughter"—etc., etc., and the talk flowed into other channels until the visitors took their leave.

"Deuced fine girl, that daughter of Rowley's. A gentlewoman, too; so quiet and self-possessed. She has a look of her great grand-aunt—yes, it must be a great-aunt—the Marchioness of Pennywern. Never made out why Rowley didn't get pushed up. He ought to have had interest, but he was just the sort of man to hide his light under a bushel. I remember him well some—that is, a good many—years ago, but have lost sight of him for ages. Made a love match, and bedeviled himself!"—thus Colonel Fitzherbert to his host, on the doorstep.

"Come, Fitzherbert," cried his companion, "it's too cold to discuss Rowley's life and adventures to-night. If you keep the mare much longer waiting, she'll kick us into 'Kingdom Come.'"

The guests therefore lit up, mounted their dogcart, and drove off.

"There is a decided touch of frost to-night," said Palliser, returning to the warm, well-lit drawing room, where his sister and Janet stood by the fire. "I am afraid we are going to have a spell of hard weather. Still, I suppose we shall manage a run to-morrow, Miss Rowley. I congratulate you on the subjugation of the arch-judge. Old Fitz says—but I will spare your blushes, and only say that he observes a striking resemblance to a certain Marchioness of Pennywern, some relative of yours."

"How could he possibly know?" cried Janet, in great surprise. "There is a miniature of her at home; you would be amused at the idea of its being like me!"

"You must show it to me, some day."

"But is it not curious that he should have known my father?"

"No, not at all. In society like ours everybody is likely to know everybody."

Then they exchanged good nights, for Lady Saville was very tired; and Palliser got a book and lounged long, cigar in mouth, over his dressing-room fire, but he did not read much.

The next day was splendidly fine, clear, and frosty, yet not so frosty as to interfere with the projected run. The meet was at some distance, and as Lady Saville sent Janet a message that she should not get up till late that young lady did not descend to the breakfast room until the sound of horses' feet dying away told her the hunter had departed.

It was rather a long afternoon. Lady Saville seemed very unwell, though more depressed in spirits than physically affected. She evidently wished to be left alone. So Janet took the day into her own hands, mended a little, played a little, read a great deal, and about three o'clock went out for a solitary ramble, during which she did some self-examination and made a small cairn of good resolutions.

Evening was fast closing in when she reached the house.

"If you please, 'm," said the butler, whom she met in the hall, "Mr. Palliser desired me to say that tea was ready in the library."

"And Lady Saville? Is she better? Is she downstairs?"

"No, 'm. Her ladyship is still in her room; her cold is very severe."

Janet went into her favorite haunt. It was unoccupied. She removed her hat and cloak and took a cup of tea.

"I suppose Mr. Palliser has had a long run, and has gone to dress and rest till dinner," she thought. So she took a book and curled herself up in the corner of a luxurious sofa beside a glowing fire, the light from which caught the golden gleams in her sunny hair, and flickered on the arch of her white neck as she bent over her book.

She read on for a while till a sudden sense of someone near made her look up to find Palliser standing beside her. He seemed even taller and more distinguished than ever in his braided smoking jacket.

"I did not hear you come in," exclaimed Janet, putting down her book.

"No, I stole in like a thief in the night."

"How does Lady Saville seem?"

"No great things; she is up, but will not leave her room. I have been sitting with her." A pause—Janet felt strangely at a loss what to say.

"Have you had tea?"

"Thank you, yes."

Palliser rang and ordered the tea to be removed.

"I ought not to have put off my hat and cloak here," she said apologetically, "I will take them away," and she rose as if to go.

"What can it possibly matter?" exclaimed Palliser; "and why do you invariably escape, or try to escape, when I want to talk to you? I did not think I was a disagreeable fellow."

"But indeed you are *not*," eagerly—then, with a

little more caution, "Everyone thinks you are agreeable."

"Then pray sit down and let us discuss matters and things in general"—and he placed himself beside her. There was a short pause, during which Janet resolved to be very collected and argumentative.

"What profound subject are you studying now?" asked Palliser, opening her book. "'Macaulay's Essays'? Oh! this is merely light literature to you."

"Ah! Mr. Palliser, you laugh at my ambitious attempts, but I really enjoy——"

"Laugh!" he interrupted. "Do you believe I ever laugh at what interests you? You are very much mistaken; women as truthful and natural as you are never laughed at. That is why I like to talk to you, to look into your eyes—because, whatever lips or eyes tell me I feel I can trust. You do not know what a fresh, what a delightful, sensation this is to me. But your eyes tell me very little, you are so very chary of your glances! That is one reason why I always seek you, though you do your best to avoid me. Do you know what the other reason is?"

Janet, who was now almost past words, shook her head.

Palliser drew nearer, and resting his arm on the back of the sofa, leaned his head on his hand, and looked at her intently for an instant, then said in a low tone and very deliberately—"Because I love you! Love you as you have as yet no conception of loving! May I try to teach you? I will give my life to the task."

There was a moment's silence. Janet was trembling all over, far more uneasy than delighted.

"Will you speak to me?" whispered Palliser.

"I cannot," said Janet, at last, clasping her hands together, and turning her face toward him with downcast eyes, "it seems so impossible."

"What! That I should love you, sweet one? Nothing in the world was more likely. You *must* have known I loved you; you must have *felt* that the words I have just spoken have been on my lips a dozen times, though I held them back, fearing to startle you prematurely. Now, tell me, what chance have I? I know it is a great deal to ask, but *will* you give me *yourself?* Will you, can you, love me?"

This was so solemn a question that it steadied Janet's nerves, and with sudden composure she lifted her eyes to his, saying:

"I will try to be true. Indeed, I am not sure. It disturbs me strangely when I see you, but when I think of not seeing you—I do not like the idea. I wish you were not so grand and rich; I wish I had something to bring with me," and she clasped her hands.

Palliser caught them in his own, and kissed them passionately.

"You tell me more than I hoped for!" he exclaimed. "Say you will give yourself to me; that you will be my wife, and let me win the love you have not quite given me yet. My darling love, your father likes me. I am sure he will not object to me."

"Ah, yes! you are so nice and pleasant to him that——"

"You will love me for his sake?" put in Palliser, smiling.

"I will love you for your own," she returned, with an inexpressible tone of gentle dignity that touched and calmed her lover.

"My darling, you are infinitely good! I will not be unworthy of your affection; and, Janet, you do love me a little?"

She looked at him, laughed, blushed, shook her head, and found herself in his arms, held closely to his heart, while his lips clung to her sweet, fresh mouth, as if they could never tear themselves away. Yet he soon let her go; when he felt how wildly her heart beat, he feared to agitate her more.

"You are so sensitive—so timid, with all your pluck, Janet, that I dread offending or alarming you. Sit down beside me again," for she had risen in her confusion. "Let us talk of our plans, or rather mine. Let me hold your hand. I ask no more now."

And then ensued a long, rambling conversation, chiefly on Palliser's side, half-reminiscent, half-prospective, during which Janet learned how soon Palliser had been attracted to her, and how long his probation had seemed to him, as he had feared to spoil his own game by too early a declaration.

How sweet was all this folly! Let philosophers and worldlings sneer and shrug, grant it is even beneath the contempt of ordinary common sense; can any of them give a glimpse of that exquisite fleeting heaven, that temporary paradise of tenderness and mutual understanding, which the first avowal of reciprocal love creates? It may be evanescent, but the life that has not known this gleam of a light that was never on land or sea, is poor indeed!

"But, Mr. Palliser, it is almost dinner time," remonstrated Janet, at last; "and I should like to see Lady Saville."

"By all means! She will be anxious to know the result of our interview."

"Why?"

"Because," he said, laughing, "she has been my confidante all through. Don't you know my name yet, my darling? I shall never answer to Mr. Palliser from your lips again."

"Mr. Palliser comes more readily to me, but I will *try* to remember—Randal!" The word was held back till she was passing through the door.

CHAPTER VII.

WEDDING BELLS.

THE days which followed left an indelible impression upon Janet's mind, a kind of glittering confusion through which she seemed passing into a new state of being.

It was very wonderful to be welcomed and caressed as a new sister by so refined and distinguished a woman as Lady Saville, and gently chaffed respecting the glamour she had exercised over Palliser. Yet, although she never offended against good taste, it seemed to Janet that Lady Saville hardly treated the solemn subject of impending marriage with sufficient gravity. To Janet it was inexpressibly serious and touching. Palliser seemed to her the noblest and most chivalrous of men, and all she asked was to prove herself worthy of his affection; for the indefinite admiration of him, which had thrilled her with a strange mixture of pleasure and unrest, had now settled into a kind of proud devotion—even while his passionately expressed love for herself made repose impossible.

Then their *tête-à-tête* dinner, for Lady Saville could or would not join them, was a tremendous trial, though she did her best to be tranquil and composed. When Edwards, the superior butler, offered her chablis, or James, the accomplished footman, brought her oyster

patties, she felt that both were perfectly aware she had first promised to marry their master, and had permitted him to kiss her on the strength of their engagement. Then, although Palliser made a gallant and successful attempt on general topics, he could not keep from a happy smile or laugh when he met her eyes, an acknowledgment of his own efforts to keep up appearances before the servants.

When dinner was over, there was a nervously delightful interval of unrestrained talk in the drawing room, during which Janet began to feel herself a little more accustomed to her position, and Palliser put a fine diamond and sapphire engagement ring on her slender finger.

"Do you think Lady Saville has gone to bed?" asked Janet, at last.

"Yes, I do. She said she would, and I know she wants to be all right to-morrow; there will be a good deal to do. I wish to Heaven I had not asked those fellows who are coming next week. They will be hideously in the way; but I cannot put them off, and as I have asked them in relays it will be quite ten days or a fortnight before the place is clear of them, and all that time I can only see you by snatches, for I think it better not to announce our engagement till I am free of my guests."

"Yes, much better," said Janet, "and Mr.—I mean Randal—I should like to go home to-morrow. I do long to be with my dear father, and to hear what he will say." There was a slight catch in her voice as she said this.

"Yes, sweet one!" returned Palliser, taking her

hand in both his, and kissing it. "I understand what you feel, and I will not be so selfish as to try to keep you. But as to what your good father will say—I can tell you! When I went home with him yesterday I told him my aspirations, my love for you, and asked his consent if I should be so fortunate as to obtain yours. I am glad to say that he is ready to accept me as a son, if you are willing to present me in that character."

"How good and thoughtful you are!" cried Janet, returning the pressure of his hand with a franker show of affection than she had yet evinced. "I am so glad the dear old father knows."

"And, if you pardon the apparent conceit, he seems quite pleased."

"I am sure he is: he always liked you—Randal."

"Ah! You are kind, my darling, to think of my name. How sweet it is to hear you say it," etc., etc.

At length Janet insisted on bidding him good-night.

"And when you have talked with Captain Rowley, I have one or two petitions to offer which you must not refuse, my darling," were his last words that night.

"I don't suppose I shall," she returned with a sweet, bright smile.

The next morning Janet spent a good deal of time with Lady Saville, who seemed to her weak and low. She was very kind and sympathetic, however, though her slightly depressed tone rather dulled the glitter of Janet's brand-new happiness. They parted with many expressions of regard, for Lady Saville meant to leave for Aldershot the following day.

Janet was more overcome than she liked to show when she reached her modest home, where she found her father evidently expecting her. The thought that soon it would be hers no longer flashed upon her with sudden force—fancy depicting the dear old man sitting alone through the long winter's evening, pining for his bit of backgammon, and going off an hour too early to bed because he could not keep his eyes open. She could hardly keep back the tears. How ardently she wished she had not to marry Mervyn Hall as well as Randal Palliser; but she was silent on many subjects, fearing Randal might be offended.

Her father soon showed that he perceived her emotion; a tender hand pressure assured her of his sympathy, and, had they been alone, she might have testified her gratitude with a degree of warmth he could not have anticipated.

After a short visit Palliser took his leave, saying with his pleasant smile, as he shook hands warmly with his intended father-in-law, "I know Janet is dying to see me depart, that she may open her heart to you!"

"Yes!" she returned, with shy warmth, "but I want you to come to-morrow."

With what a mixture of pleasure and tenderness she threw herself into the old man's arms, and kissed him over and over again with tears, much to the excellent captain's surprise, for a good deal of Janet's finer feelings were incomprehensible to him.

"What's the matter, my girl? You are not sorry you've promised to marry Palliser? You'd be hard to please if you didn't like a fine fellow like him! He might take any woman's fancy—and a thorough gen-

tleman into the bargain. I have always been an old fool about you, my pet, and thought no man would be good enough for you, but, by George! I believe Palliser is!"

"No, no! dearest dad! I am very fond of him and pleased to marry him, but what—what will you do without me, dad?"

"Do! I'll do right well," stroking her head, while his voice was slightly unsteady. "I'll come and see you and dine with you, if I get hipped; and Janet, child, don't you think, that knowing you are safe in a beautiful home, with a good husband to take care of you through the troubles of life, will be a real joy and comfort to me? And you will be a credit to me, my pet."

Janet gradually perceived that her projected marriage was a source of pride and pleasure to her father, and whatever effect her absence might produce, the outlook at present was certainly cheerful.

This did more to restore her equanimity than anything else. Captain Rowley was not of a sufficiently high-toned mind to be superior to the exultation naturally consequent on the prospect of seeing his daughter at the head of one of the finest establishments in the county, with a really "fine gentleman," in the best sense, for her husband. Where would the Richard Egertons be now?—who never asked him or his daughter to their grand ball last spring. Or old Lady Melesina Jones, who patronized them in such a palpable manner. He could venture to expend some of his hard savings in furthering Tom's fortunes, now that Janet, the delight of his eyes, was to be so amply

provided for. The old sailor grew quite jovial over his dinner, and even took a second glass of port; before that meal was over Janet began to think herself unnecessarily sentimental. Finally, her father chaffed her with much glee for her inattention to their game of backgammon, which she took in excellent part, occasionally stroking her father's rugged, wrinkled hand as it grasped the dice box.

"Dad, dear," she said, when they had shut up the board and were about to bid good-night, "shall you be going out early to-morrow?"

"Yes, my dear. I want to get a few things. Probably Palliser will stay to dinner."

"Then will you turn into the vicarage, and ask Mary to come and see——"

"You want to tell her the news?" interrupted her father.

"Yes."

"Then don't, my pet. Both Palliser and I have agreed that we'll keep everything 'mum' and quiet until he's got rid of his party, and then—the sooner everything is finished off the better."

"But Mary would be as prudent and silent as possible. We have been such close friends, it would seem unkind, disloyal, to keep her in the dark, like——"

"Stuff and nonsense, my dear! No girl is prudent or silent when there's a marriage in the air. No, no, Janet, promise me that you will not drop a hint to anyone. It would be a deuce of a bore if a whisper of the business got about. You'd have no peace of your life, nor I either. Besides, Palliser wants the affair announced and carried through at once; and he

is quite right. You know, poor fellow, after the mess he made of it to begin with, he does not want to give the gossips too long a tether. He'll explain all he wants to you and plead his own cause a deuced deal better than I can, but I hope you'll show yourself a straightforward, sensible girl and no prude; he'll think all the more of you, and so will I. No, don't talk any more—go to your bed and sleep; you look a little pale and done up—and not a word to man, woman, or child till I can announce the engagement all over the place. God bless you, my pet, shut up your eyes fast, and don't lie awake thinking."

Janet felt there was nothing for it but to obey, so far as going to her room went, but sleep would not come when called. She lay long awake, much exercised in mind respecting her enforced reserve with Mary, who was so good and true. How could she see her every day and yet deceive her? Still, her father's and Palliser's wishes were all-powerful with Janet, and indeed she shrank from drawing down the full storm of observation, conjecture, and congratulation upon herself an hour too soon.

Finally, had her father and Palliser determined that the marriage was to take place soon—very soon? This startling proposition she considered from every point of view. It was less startling the more she looked at it. Janet was especially domestic; she looked forward to settling down into calmer, everyday life when Palliser and herself were united—belonging to each other in the eyes of the whole world, sharing the same home and duties and cares. Then she would be composed and at rest, and undisturbed by the strange quivering thrills

of almost fearful pleasure which agitated her whenever she was with Palliser. Her uneasiness respecting Mary Winyard was somewhat allayed by a visit from that dear friend early next morning. She was looking bright and very pleased—exercise had given her a color and made her almost pretty, for Mary was rather a plain likeness of her brother.

"I am absolutely going away for a month, Janet!" was her greeting. "Mother's cousin, Mrs. Crompton, at Southampton, has asked me to pay them a visit, and I am going immediately—on Saturday, if possible; so I cannot make much preparation. I am so glad to have a quiet talk with you before I go. What a long time you stayed at the Hall. How long has Mr. Palliser been back—about a week? Isn't Lady Saville nice? Had you many parties?" And the two girls plunged into the usual kind of gossip, Mary being so taken up with the sudden break in the monotony of her life that she did not notice how little of the conversation fell to Janet's share.

"You will look after my poor people, will you not, Janet? And oh, do try to look in and have a little talk with mother every day if possible. Mother is so fond of you; you cheer her up."

"I will, dear, as often as I can; but I may go away for a while myself," returned Janet, with a sound of tears in her voice.

"What! Are you going to London again? You lucky girl!" exclaimed Mary. "I hope you will not go till I come back. Why, Janet, what is the matter? You don't seem to like the idea. Are you not quite well?"

Janet assured her she never was better, and added with an arch smile that she did like the idea of going to London. Then Mary departed, overwhelmed with the sense of all she had to do before Saturday.

. . . . . .

Lady Saville was not quite well enough to start the day she intended. Palliser, therefore, begged Janet and her father to come over to the Hall for a consultation about future plans; when, as might have been expected, he had his own way on most points.

Janet soon saw that everything had been carefully arranged, and that her father had been taken into the council.

"You see, my dear Janet," urged Lady Saville, with whom she had a long *tête-à-tête* while Palliser and her father took a walk to the home farm, "it will be much wiser to get through the whole business as soon as possible. Randal will have no peace, nor give anyone any peace till he is married, and you would be bored to death by the people here—believe me you will be much happier when you are settled. I think you and your father had better come and stay with me; we can make all the preparations so much better in town, and there will be a great deal to do. Randal can come to and fro—or put up at the Club Chambers. He hasn't a town house."

In short, everything had been thought of and settled, and Janet agreeing with their views in their common-sense aspect, and only held back by a sort of nervous reluctance to break so suddenly with the old life, seeing that her father was strongly on Palliser's side, was carried irresistibly on the stream—and it was

decided *nem. con.* that as soon as Captain Rowley could conveniently leave home he and Janet should take up their abode in Eaton Square and remain there till the marriage, which was to take place as early in December as could be managed.

Then at Palliser's request Lady Saville gave her a history of his first unfortunate marriage. "He said he could not bear the humiliation of recounting it himself," she told Janet. "It has been a most unfortunate business for him, poor fellow. He has been so awfully ashamed of having been made such a fool of; the ridicule has hurt him more than anything; he is very sensitive and proud. He need not have gone so far; in a fortnight society had forgotten all about his misfortunes and had thrown itself on someone else's. Now I fancy he would like to stay abroad most of the winter for the same reason. Of course, when his marriage is announced, there will be a fresh outbreak of talk. Perhaps you might like to come back sooner?"

"Oh, no. I shall be charmed to travel about. I always wish to see the places abroad I have read of."

"That is all very well, my dear child, but do cultivate tastes and a will of your own. Do not fancy a husband will think a bit the better of you, or care for you any better because you adopt *his* ideas, and give in to him in everything; a husband likes the excitement of opposition, and the necessity of bringing a wife round to his opinions gives her importance. I made terrible mistakes at first, and went on making mistakes till it was too late to mend."

"But, dear Lady Saville, if two people love and understand each other, all these small matters will arrange themselves."

"My dear, love and understanding never affect the everlasting struggle for the upper hand between men and women, or rather, between human beings."

"Still," exclaimed Janet, with a sunny smile, "I do not think Randal and I will find much to quarrel about. I should be an ungrateful wretch if I were to vex him."

"For Heaven's sake, Janet, do not let any absurd notions about gratitude take root in your mind—they will ruin you. You have nothing to be so grateful for; you have made yourself indispensable to Randal, and he is ready to pay any price to secure you. He is, in many ways, a good fellow; but like any man that ever was born, he wants management. However, I see you do not heed me, so to return to our muttons, try to come up to me as soon as possible. It would be so much better for you to be away during this tiresome party of Randal's; and we could be getting on with the trousseau."

"Ah, yes, the trousseau," murmured Janet, her speaking face changing somewhat; "is it necessary to have a very large one?"

"By no means; just enough to go on with. Then when you are Mrs. Palliser, with a proper allowance of pin money, you can get everything you want."

Janet knew that her father could not give her a fine trousseau, and she shrank from the idea of receiving anything from Palliser before she was his wife; still it must be managed somehow! Yes, she was very glad

to go away from the prying gossips of Langford, only she would like the vicar to marry her.

Though Captain Rowley had sternly enjoined silence and prudence on his daughter, he profoundly enjoyed announcing Janet's engagement to the squire of Mervyn Hall, when the time came, and the astonishment which consequently fell on Langford—genteel Langford.

Janet insisted on telling Mrs. Winyard herself. That much enduring woman was greatly affected by the news; she even shed a few tears, and solemnly blessed her young favorite, but she did not mention her son's name. Janet well knew, however, that he was in her thoughts, and this made her all the more ready to go away. It was a great relief to quit Langford, especially as she knew she was coming back there to her permanent home.

"And when we meet again," said Palliser, as he leaned against the door of the railway carriage, waiting for the guard's signal to start, "when we meet again, my darling, we shall have no more partings. You will write to me every day, as I will to you. I think we are going to have some fine open weather. I hope so! Hunting will help the time to pass more quickly."

Here the guard's whistle rang out, and Palliser stepped back. Then they sped away and were soon beyond the limit of Janet's furthest rambles. She felt as if she had already left her old life far behind, and bade it a tender, but not reluctant, adieu.

Lady Saville was waiting to receive them at Paddington, and welcomed them with the graceful warmth

she knew so well how to adopt. Then the visitors, their wraps and small bags, with a huge basket of fruit and flowers from the Hall, were swept away in a comfortable double brougham to Lady Saville's town house.

Their kind hostess had invited Tom Rowley to meet his father and sister at dinner, and as he came punctually she stayed a few minutes longer over her toilet, in order to let the family meeting take place without her presence.

Tom was an unlike likeness of his father. He was short and broad and sandy, but his expression had a touch of foxiness, and his eyes were lighter and less kindly than Captain Rowley's. He was much absorbed in his work, and very eager to get on. His sister's grand marriage was a great joy to him. Though fairly straight and independent, he did not see why he should not get some personal good out of it. Anyhow, he would try.

Janet was really glad to see him, but was disgusted with herself for feeling rather disappointed with his appearance. They had not met for a year, and either he had deteriorated or she had grown hypercritical, but though well dressed in the evening clothes of everyday humanity, he did not look quite a gentleman. His movements, his attitudes, his voice, had in them something indescribable which displeased her. To be sure, she could not expect everyone to be distinguished, like Randal. No one *was* quite equal to him, and Tom, poor boy, had not had many advantages!

"Well, Madam Janet," he exclaimed when the first

greetings were exchanged, "you have done well for yourself! I suppose you'll be a regular swell, too fine for your own people!"

"O Tom," she was beginning, when Lady Saville came in—and Tom sank into silence, speaking very little during his stay, but evidently appreciating the good things sat before him. In fact he had few subjects in common with his *convives* and did not feel quite comfortable with Lady Saville, who, though exquisitely polite, seemed a little puzzled with him.

When he had drunk a little wine, he came out more and mentioned the leading facts of a rather curious case in which his firm was engaged; using a good many technical terms. Then he invited his father to dine with him at his "diggings" next day—and Janet was on the whole rather glad when he was gone.

Curiously enough Janet felt more at home and at ease in this strange place than in the abode she had left—so completely had her old life been broken up.

Their hostess was so kind and courteous, and had so many topics to discuss, that the evening passed swiftly.

"Janet, my dear," said Lady Saville next morning, "we must be up and doing. I am going to carry her off, Captain Rowley, to my own particular modiste, who has promised to devote all the resources of her establishment to our service. I want to get as much as possible accomplished before Randal comes up to town. We shall find him a great hindrance. Go and dress, dear; I shall give a sketch of our proposed proceedings as we drive to Bond Street."

"Very well, Lady Saville; I am so thankful to you

for this help. I really don't know what I should do without you."

As soon as Janet had left the room, Captain Rowley rose, and drawing a notebook from his breast pocket said, with some solemnity, "My daughter is right. You are a sister and a mother to her in one! But it is enough that you take all this trouble for us. I don't want you or anyone else to be put to any expense. I'm not a rich man, but my girl must not be indebted to anyone for her wedding gown!" Here he opened the book and took out an envelope. "There," he continued, handing it to Lady Saville, "you'll find five twenty-pound notes in that, and I fancy they'll buy fallals enough for a princess! Your taste and judgment will dispose of them to the best advantage."

"Thank you, my dear Captain Rowley, you are most considerate and generous. I shall see that Janet has everything she requires," returned Lady Saville, with a sweet smile, and greatly amused at the self-satisfied, important air of the simple old sailor, as he made this magnificent provision for his daughter's needs.

In the disposal of this handsome sum, Lady Saville contrived to endow it with such extraordinary elasticity that Captain Rowley was excited to swear some almost forgotten sea-going oaths, expressive of surprise at the amount of money's worth she managed to get for it.

As to Janet, she was quite dazed by the quantity of clothes considered absolutely necessary by Lady Saville.

Morning dresses, walking dresses, carriage dresses, evening dresses, tea gowns, morning gowns, dressing gowns, then the heaps of dainty, lace-trimmed undergarments, the boots and the shoes, the gloves and the ribbons—Lady Saville wanted to order all and everything. Here Janet stood firm.

"It is absolutely sinful to order such piles of things," she said; "I should be obliged to change my dress every hour of the day to use even the half of them. Then fashions change, and I shall want different shapes and stuffs, which I can buy for myself, as I am to have such a large allowance. Of course, poor dear dad's hundred pounds can go but a very short way, and—and—I want to pay all the rest myself a little later, that is——"

"My dear Janet, if you intend to waste your allowance in that way, I am sorry for you. You will bitterly regret such Quixotism. Randal would be furious if you dressed in a dowdy, economical way."

"Still, Lady Saville, I will not have all these dresses; at all events until I understand better what I want, and, traveling about, I shall not need more than one or two evening dresses. As to having all these boots and shoes made, it is rather a waste of time. Why not get them ready-made?"

"Good Heavens, Janet! Would you ruin your feet? would you really wear such things?"

"I have worn them all my life, and I do not think my feet are ruined yet," etc., etc.

But Janet was quite firm, and astonished Mme. Frillibert by her moderation, as she did her future sister-in-law by her determination.

Then Palliser, having got rid of his guests, came to town, and Janet found herself torn between his demands on her time and those of the modiste and her myrmidons.

There was one tremendous evening of excitement both to Captain Rowley and Lady Saville, when the family diamonds and other jewels were brought up, in charge of one of the clerks from the bank, and tried on the fair *fiancée*.

"They are rather old-fashioned," said Palliser, contemplating her critically. "I think I shall have them reset while we are abroad. They would be ready in time for your presentation, Janet."

"Oh! dear Randal; they are lovely as they are," and an animated discussion ensued, in which Janet carried her point.

"Really our *ingénue* is singularly indifferent to the unwonted grandeur with which you load her, Randal," said his sister, when Janet, quite tired out with the rush and strain of the day, had gone to her room.

"She has the instincts of a gentlewoman, and they lift her above a vulgar delight in finery; besides," with a smile of undisguised self-satisfaction, "I flatter myself she is too much taken up with *me* to care much about my belongings."

"She is certainly very fond of you," returned Lady Saville.

"I hope so! And I am glad she is much more at home with me. At first she was half afraid of me or of her own feelings. It was heavenly, but it would have become deucedly inconvenient later."

When the day of days in a woman's life dawned at

last, Janet was thankful that the hurry and high pressure was over, and that repose and a return to something like her normal life lay before her.

She had her wish. The vicar came up to town the day before to perform the ceremony. The faithful Mary, however, refused to be bridesmaid, though pressed warmly. Her heart was with her absent brother, though she felt she had no right to be angry with Janet.

The bride therefore went unattended to the altar, and her father could hardly believe that the stately, splendidly attired young creature who stood before him was his own light-hearted industrious Janet.

The whole thing was soon over; the wedding was almost private as regards the limited number present, and then Janet seemed to be clothed in her traveling dress with magic celerity by her new maid, a severe elderly widow, rather distinguished looking and desperately experienced, of whom her mistress was slightly in awe; in another minute she was clinging to her father with tears and kisses till her husband gently drew her away.

"It is only for a time, my darling. We will both be with him soon again."

"And he shall stay a while with me, dear; we shall have a grand time together," put in Lady Saville,

Then Palliser hurried into the carriage and Janet Rowley passed away.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE DAILY ROUND."

IT was at the end of March that our bride and bridegroom found themselves again in Paris on their homeward way.

Those three months had been rich in experience of many kinds for Janet. After a short stay at Cannes they had pursued their way to Rome, where they had made many acquaintances, or rather Janet had, for it seemed to her that her husband knew everyone in the world already. She had been greatly amused with the people and profoundly interested in the place. Indeed, as Palliser observed, she had developed a forty-horse-power of sight-seeing. He was a little bored—a not unusual mental condition with him. He was still very passionately in love, and he wanted to have his wife all to himself: nor was she less enchanted to be alone with him, only when she was not she could amuse herself very cheerfully. Palliser, though too lazy to care about the society in Rome, was pleased to see how well and successfully Janet posed as Mrs. Palliser of Mervyn Hall. He thought this was the result of some wonderful reserve fund of tact, which he did not dream she possessed; whereas it was the outcome of happiness, the certainty of her position, and the insight of a quick intelligence, not of any forethought or worldly

wisdom. Her common sense always prompted her to ask her husband his opinion of the various people introduced to her, as she was keenly alive to her own inexperience, and she thus ascertained his estimate of others, and the terms on which he wished to stand with them.

"You are a wonderfully shrewd little woman, Janet," he sometimes said to her, with lazy admiration. "The way you pick my brains is quite extraordinary—but you are right to take me for your pilot."

So all things went well and smoothly, and in this world of grief and trial, sorrow and disappointment, there was one supremely happy creature, for whom the past had no secrets, the future no fears; who, when she stopped to think, was even a little awed by her own bliss.

"What are you going to do this morning, Randal?" she asked one fine mild day, more like the end of April than of March.

"I don't know exactly. I thought of going over to the Embassy to see Dacre. He wants me to look at a horse at Beauregard's stables; he thinks of buying it. They say it's a pure Arab."

"Very well," said Janet, turning from the window, which looked out on the Tuileries gardens, and coming over to the fireplace where her husband was lounging, his shoulder against the mantel shelf. "Then I shall go to poor Marie Antoinette's prison. I have wished so much to see it. These sort of places bore you, as you have seen everything."

"No, not everything, Janet. You cannot go alone."

"I shall take Mrs. Raynes with me. She can speak

French fairly well, and seems always to know what to do."

"You are getting on with Mrs. Raynes," said Palliser, taking the ends of the long sash which fastened his wife's morning gown, and twisting them together indolently. "I thought you were a little in awe of her?"

"Oh! I fear no one when you are behind me," slipping her arm through his and pressing it to her side. "Then I have grown accustomed to her and she to me. I think she is rather fond of me."

"Impossible! She is much too severe a British matron to be fond of anything or anyone. At all events she seems to know her business—your hair is very well done up."

"I am glad you like it. But it is my own doing; I always do it myself in the morning."

"I believe you have an abstract love of taking trouble."

"There is something else I want to speak to you about—first, how long are we to stay here?" continued Janet.

"I am not sure; I rather want to see Lord L., who will be passing through in a fortnight" (he named a well-known Conservative statesman). "Shall we stay till the last week in April?"

"How lovely the woods will be looking!" she exclaimed. "But if we are to stay so long I should like to take some French lessons. I cannot speak nearly as well as Raynes, and last night I scarcely understood anything Sarah Bernhardt said."

"And what am I to do when you are absorbed in profound study?"

"Well, Randal, I like to get up early, and you are rather lazy, so if I got up an hour or two earlier, I should be quite ready to walk or drive with you when you wanted me."

"Where shall you find a teacher? I don't want you to have a hairy, grinning ape of a French master."

Janet laughed.

"Lady Dacre knows a very accomplished French mistress, '*diplomé'd*,' and all that."

"Very well, only you must not desert me."

"I had a delightful long letter from my father this morning. He seems quite well and bright; longing to see us again. Would you like to read it?"

"Thanks, dearest; you can tell me all about it. By the way, my lawyers write that the man who has made an offer for that place of mine in Sussex is Dick Palliser. He offers a very fair price, too; well, he is welcome to it on those terms. But I trust he will never set foot in Mervyn Hall."

"My father says he is to be married on the 29th, and is going to leave the army."

"More fool he. His only chance of distinction was to stick to his profession. Hullo! that is eleven striking; I had better be off; I promised to breakfast with Dacre if I could. You'll take care of yourself, then?" He held her to him for a parting kiss, and was gone.

Soon after Mrs. Palliser and her maid set out for the gloomy portals of the Conciergerie. Janet rather wished that her husband could share the keen interest with which she examined historic sites, and places

hallowed by tradition, for every pleasure shared by him was doubled or trebled.

She could not help perceiving that, in these directions, what engrossed her was weariness to him. To matters connected with hunting or racing, he was all alive; but when, anxious to know his opinion and guide herself by his judgment, she tried to discuss characters and events of the past, he only chaffed her for her earnestness respecting bygone things, which didn't signify now and were not worth a thought.

Of course, Janet put this down to his superior knowledge and experience; still she would not wish to forego the vivid pleasure her own freshness afforded her, even to reach the high mental level of her husband.

She gradually came to do all her sight-seeing under the guardianship of Mrs. Raynes, who appeared to know a little of everything, having served a variety of mistresses—the wildly gay, the serious-minded, the severely intellectual; but she was not given to talk of her experiences—only a stray word here and there suggested to her young lady her various experiences.

Between her sight-seeing, her French studies, and her faithful correspondence with her father, Janet had sometimes a rushing to be ready for luncheon with her husband, who amused himself much more in Paris than in Rome or Florence, and was now quite ready to go out of an evening, and pleased to return the hospitalities of his friends.

Janet was sometimes amused and surprised at herself for the rapidity with which she had become acclimatized to the habits and customs of the wealthy

"upper ten." Generally, this process was facilitated by the good breeding of the people with whom she associated. Of course, among them was a sprinkling of the brusque and insolent, but Mrs. Palliser of Mervyn Hall was too well placed, too well backed up by a husband known to and versed in the ways of society, to be troubled by the presumption or ill-nature of these exceptions. She was calm and fearless, strong in the affection and approbation of her husband.

The only shadow of difference between them was on the question of dancing. The English ambassador gave a ball, and Janet, enchanted to dance again, and to such delightful music as she had never danced to before, accepted all offers, and spun lightly round with attachés and distinguished foreigners of all nations. She was enjoying herself immensely, when she caught a glimpse of Palliser looking after her with an expression such as she had never before seen on his face.

The moment the dance was over, she went up to him, and dismissing her partner with a smile and a few pleasant words, she put her arm through her husband's and asked him what had happened to annoy him.

"Do I show my annoyance so unguardedly?" he asked, his countenance clearing a little.

"I can always tell what you are thinking about," she said; "I know every change in your face; others may not!"

"I am annoyed, and with you! It is very thoughtless of you to dance. You will overfatigue yourself, which is never wise—and—and—I don't like to see my wife whirling round with every whipper-snapper that asks her."

"But, Randal," she returned, rather overwhelmed, "I am perfectly strong and well; and these men are your own acquaintances. They are very nice too; I like them all."

"Well, I am not so catholic in my likings, and I do not care to see you so—so abandoned to the pleasure of the moment." Janet laughed, rather to Palliser's surprise, who expected to see tears filling her eyes.

"I really think you are very silly. But if it annoys you, dear, I will not dance any more, though"—showing him her card—"you see all the dances I am engaged for! I do not know how I am to excuse myself—and the cotillon! Oh, I should like to dance the cotillon!" She looked up into his face with a sweet frank smile, but his brow did not quite relax.

"It is foolish, and I do not like it," he said; "but you must not make yourself remarkable. I will make your excuses to—let me see"—taking her card—"Oh! that Hungarian fellow. Well, I shall manage him. He speaks English well. Come, you had better sit down over here beside Lady Dacre." He turned as he spoke, and his face changed immediately on finding himself face to face with a gentleman—an extremely sunburnt gentleman, fair-haired and blue-eyed, shorter than himself, but broader and squarer.

"Why, Saville! I had no idea you were in Paris!" exclaimed Palliser, in considerable surprise.

"Only arrived this morning. Met Lord D., by accident. He asked me to come to the ball to-night, and here I am! Come, my dear fellow, present me to your wife."

"Sir Frederic Saville—Mrs. Palliser," said her husband in proper form.

Janet smiled and put out her hand—"Lady Saville has so often spoken of you," was her introductory remark.

Sir Frederic elevated his eyebrows, as he took the hand she offered.

"My dear Mrs. Palliser, it is an awful thing to be discussed by the wife of one's bosom!"

"You would not think so if you had heard the discussion," returned Janet, rather startled by his words. "We thought you must have returned to England—but I have not heard from Lady Saville for some time."

"She is not the best of correspondents; but let us find a seat. I have been longing to make your acquaintance. Palliser, my dear fellow, dispose of yourself somewhere and let me make the best impression I can upon your wife."

"Very well. I will go and get rid of one of her cavaliers at least," and he went off with a smile and a nod, which told Janet she was forgiven.

"Do you know you are not a bit like what I expected you to be?" resumed Sir Frederic, as he took his place beside Janet on a sofa in a convenient recess, while he looked at her from head to foot very critically. "When Lady Saville did write she generally said a great deal about you. I believe you are devoted friends, and have as yet had no opportunity of quarreling."

"Lady Saville has been charming to me, and we shall put off quarreling as long as we can," returned Janet good-humoredly.

"Possibly you may manage to keep the peace a little longer—that is if she intends to favor me with her company—for I am not going to stay in England."

"Shall you return to the East, then?" with some surprise.

"The East? Oh, no, I am unfortunately ineligible either for civil or military service. I am going to Scotland for fishing, and then I may go to Norway in June; after, Heaven knows. At any rate, if Gertrude deigns to come with me, your friendship may survive a little longer," and he laughed not very pleasantly.

"I hope you will come and see us first."

"Thank you. It is a long age since I was at the Hall. Capital hunting country about there, or used to be."

"It is still good, I believe."

"Do you hunt yourself? I suppose so, as you are country-bred."

"No, nor do I think I ever shall. I did not begin early enough to have the nerve."

"Ha!" with another long, keen look; "you look like a plucky one."

"Looks are often deceptive."

"I fancy yours are truthful at present."

"What a strangely prophetic tone, Sir Frederic!"

"We'll see, Mrs. Palliser; so far it seems to me that Randal is going to have his early ill luck made up to him!"

Janet flushed up to the brow, pained by this careless allusion to her husband's great mistake, and looking round for him met his eyes with a tender, loving glance, which he interpreted as an expression of peni-

tence for her unconscious misdoing; so mollified, he approached, followed by the dispossessed Hungarian, who addressed her:

"Perhaps you will be so gracious as to give me one more dance in the place of that which I have lost?"

"With pleasure, if there is one free before we leave," and she gave him her card.

Then one of the English attachés came to claim her, and she left Palliser in conversation with his brother-in-law.

Before the cotillon arrived, however, Palliser discovered he had a slight headache, and he feared the champagne was queer, and that he should like to go home. Janet laughed at his indisposition, declaring she knew it was only to prevent her dancing any more that the headache had been so obliging as to threaten him. She made no opposition, however, to his wish to leave the ballroom, and bidding good-night to Sir Frederic Saville, they returned to the hotel contentedly enough.

The lamp was still alight in the sitting room, and Janet paused there to rest after the heated atmosphere of the ball before undressing.

"That dress suits you very well," said Palliser, as the dignified Raynes took away her mistress' cloak. "What color do you call it?"

"Eau de Nile. Yes, I like it, and the garniture of water lilies. Fine feathers make fine birds. You remember the washed-out cotton you first saw me in, Randal?"

"Yes—well. It was a royal robe, for it was worn

by my queen. Did you think me a disagreeable brute to-night, Janet?"

"A brute? Ah, no, never; only it was not exactly a lucid interval, Randal"—holding out her hand to him.

"You don't know how anxious I am about you, my darling"—pressing it tenderly.

"Why, I am not a delicate, consumptive creature, to whom the least additional exertion might be fatal."

"No, thank Heaven. Still, you must promise me to curb your love of dancing. How would you like me to whisk other women round the room all night?"

"I should be charmed to see you enjoy yourself. Why, you might even dance with me. I *should* enjoy a dance with you, Randal. I am not in the least jealous by nature."

"Then, pray remember I am. I know I could be desperately jealous and—unforgiving; though if I could ever trust anyone implicitly, it would be you, Janet."

"And *I* trust *you* without an 'if.' Tell me, Randal, is Sir Frederic Saville a jealous husband?"

"Who—Saville? No! no one can accuse him of that vice," and Palliser laughed—there was a touch of scorn in his laughter. "By the way, I think Gertrude may join him here. If so, she might help you to choose some things for your presentation dress; it is a good opportunity."

"I have quantities of things waiting for me in London, you know; my wedding-dress——"

"No matter," interrupted Palliser, "your Court dress must be in the latest fashion."

"I suppose Lady Saville will present me?"

"Yes, if she is in town, but she had much better go with Saville to Scotland."

"Naturally; but she was quite looking forward to having the boys with her at Easter; they were to go to Lord Darrell's place for the holidays."

"I suppose she will come over here now; I wish she had a little more respect for appearances."

"Who?" asked Janet, immensely surprised.

"My sister; but it is too late to gossip, get to bed as soon as you can. You will find yourself pretty well done up to-morrow, or rather this morning."

In spite, however, of urgent letters from Mr. and Mrs. Palliser, and, it was supposed, from her husband also, Lady Saville declined to join her relatives in Paris. It was so near Easter that the journey to and fro would only be useless fatigue, and she was particularly anxious to be with the boys, as after midsummer the eldest was to go to a crammer's.

The Lady Darrell with whom the holidays were to be spent was Sir Frederic's sister, and his elder by many years. She was blessed with an only son, Lord Darrell, and her existence, moral, mental, and physical, was divided between adoration of her son and of her favorite preacher.

Janet was sorry that Lady Saville decided to remain in England. She had always found her sister-in-law a pleasant companion, and was grateful for her many kindnesses. Moreover, though he did not appear to have any particular regard for Sir Frederic, Palliser was a great deal with him, and Janet found she had a little more time for sight-seeing and study than she

quite liked. She was far too well-tempered and reasonable to let this irritate or distress her. It was a temporary interruption to her delightful *tête-à-tête* with her husband, which would soon be at an end, and at Mervyn, the already beloved home which awaited her, their lives would grow more completely into one than they had been yet.

Still, she could not help perceiving that Sir Frederic Saville's company had not exactly a beneficent effect on his brother-in-law. Palliser was more impatient and dissatisfied than she had ever seen him, and Janet grew quite anxious to return to London, and see with her own eyes how the dear old dad had borne the long separation from the joy of his life.

Saville dined with them much oftener than she liked, and although he professed very openly the greatest admiration for herself, his mode of showing it was extremely unpleasant. He seemed to have no belief in anything, and his conversation, though kept fairly within decent limits, made her feel rather uneasy as to what was coming next. With all his talk about beauty and its boundless power, she could see that his contempt for women was great, though tolerably concealed under the manners of good society. Finally, it seemed to her that he drank an unusual quantity of wine, although it never affected him in the least.

In fact, the presence of Sir Frederic Saville rather spoiled the latter part of her stay in Paris. She was rarely alone with her husband in the evening, and when she was he spoke little and seemed preoccupied.

"I should not like to be married to Sir Frederic

Saville," she said on one of those rare occasions, looking up from a letter she was writing to his wife.

"I hope you would not!" returned Palliser, smiling.

"Ah! But I mean I do not think he can be a kind or a pleasant man."

"Well, I am not sure; he is rather an amusing fellow. Not exactly suited to holy orders, but generous and good-natured. He is popular with men."

"But not with women, I imagine!"

"Yes, he is—with some kinds of women. Not with blue stockings, who read Buckle's History, etc., etc.," laughing.

Janet laughed too.

"At all events, Randal, I keep my culpable tastes to myself. I do not bore people with them."

"No, I must grant that. I assure you he and Gertrude were devilishly in love with each other. In fact it was rather a bore."

"Dear Randal, what an expression! Say angelically in love!"

"There was deuced little of the angel about him at all events, and Gertrude, you know, made the mistake women often make of expecting things to go on at the same high pressure at which they began."

Janet was silent. Her husband's words suggested a train of not too agreeable reflections. Palliser watched her for a moment, and was about to speak, when she forestalled him by exclaiming, as if out of his thoughts, "But your sister is so lovable, so full of tact, that I should think her husband could never tire of her."

"Never and forever are long words, Janet, to apply

to any relationship, any state of feeling. It is wise to try and enjoy the present, and let the future take care of itself. I see poor Saville is no favorite of yours!"

"Well, no, not yet."

"You are ungrateful. He admires you loudly!"

Janet only shook her head and went on with her letter. When she had finished it and closed her blotting book, she came over to where Palliser sat half-asleep over a paper, and kissed his forehead. "You and I, dear," she said, "are to be an extra sensible couple, and settle down to real comradeship quite soon. I daresay the sober certainty of waking bliss in the calmness of everyday life is sweetest of all."

Palliser drew her down to him. "Come what may, darling, the present is delicious—too delicious for sense or calmness!"

. . . . . .

Ten days later they left for London, Sir Frederic Saville having preceded them.

It was very delightful to Janet to hear English spoken all round her after more than four months' sojourn among foreigners and the sound of strange tongues.

Palliser had taken a suite of rooms in one of the huge caravansaries which overlook St. James' Park, from a friend who had been suddenly ordered to the Riviera after a severe bronchial attack. Here he proposed to stay till after the Drawing Room, which he wished his wife to attend, and Janet, not without some longing to go "home" at once, consented. She had suggested with a curious, uneasy reluctance, that her

father should be invited to stay for a short time, and Palliser had given a brief, abrupt consent.

How delightful it was to find the dear, broad, weather-beaten face ready to meet her as she alighted at their temporary abode! With what joy she fell into his arms, and eagerly scanned the well-known countenance!

"Well, my pet!" cried the old man, in more tremulous accents than Janet had ever heard from his lips before. "You are looking better than I ever saw you. Not quite so rosy as usual, perhaps, and a trifle changed—in fact, my girl has turned into a fine lady."

"Oh, no, dearest dad; anything but that! I try to be well-behaved and careful of what I assert or admit, but that sort of thing bores me dreadfully. I am happiest when I can say out everything I think to Randal."

"That's right, my dear; tell your husband everything."

"Fortunately, I can. If he were a different kind of man, I could not."

"Ah, well; anyhow you ought. And what's become of him? Didn't he come with you?"

"Oh, yes," she returned; "he went on to his club, and will be here soon. You will stay a while with us, dear? You could not answer my letter before you started, but——"

"No, Janet, I don't think I'll put up here, though I'll dine with you occasionally. Tom has found me a room where he lodges, away in West Kensington district; it's quite convenient, what with the trains and omnibuses. Tom and I have a good deal to talk

about and settle. Between you and me and the post, Tom is thinking of being spliced—to a deuced nice girl, too; she's a daughter of Treadaway (Treadaway & Green, a very eminent firm of solicitors), and if we could only scrape a thousand pounds together, Tom would be taken in as junior partner, for Green is in bad health, and they want an active young fellow and a good lawyer, which Tom is; well, we can manage about seven hundred and eighty, so I am going to raise the rest on my house and furniture. It won't cost me more than eight or nine pounds a year, and what is that compared to giving your brother a good start!"

"What, indeed!" exclaimed Janet, with eager sympathy for poor dear Tom. "I do hope he will be happy. What is this Miss Treadaway like? It is a very ugly name!"

"I hope she will soon change it for the better. She is a black-eyed, blooming beauty—that is, very nearly a beauty—none of your ethereal skin and bone creatures, but a fine woman and plenty of her. She may be a month or two older than Tom, but that's his affair. He hasn't popped the question yet, but he may at any moment. I hope you'll have them up here to dine; I suspect you and Palliser are very big wigs in Treadaway's eyes."

"I hope she will make Tom happy; now that I know what marriage is I can understand how terrible an uncongenial husband or wife must be."

"I don't suppose Tom has quite the same views as you have on these subjects."

Father and daughter talked on happily enough, with an interval for dressing, till dinner was ready, and

Janet was delighted to hear all the Langford news. Palliser kept them waiting a little for dinner, but was very polite and profuse in his apologies. Janet thought he was rather silent and sleepy, but then he had been up rather late for two or three nights before they left Paris, so she took no notice of his drowsiness. The happy old father-in-law talked for all, and thoroughly enjoyed a good dinner and a sound glass of wine.

He was much amused and interested by the "lift," and had some talk with the porter who worked it. "Sorry you will not put up with us," said Palliser, as he was bidding the old man good-night. "I suppose you must divide yourself between your son and daughter?"

But Captain Rowley did not see as much of his daughter as he hoped.

The following day Lady Saville came up to visit her brother and his wife, and from that day forth Janet was handed over to dressmakers, milliners, and last but not least, a renowned dancing mistress, that she might be prepared to courtesy and carry her train with grace and dignity at the approaching Drawing Room.

Janet was very pleased to have the company of her sister-in-law, and much more interested in her Court than in her wedding dress. The fact that her appearance and general effect were matters of vast importance in her husband's eyes, and therefore to her position, had begun to dawn upon her, and it was consequently very apparent to Lady Saville that her countrified sister-in-law was greatly improved and much more com-

panionable, while on her side Janet observed that Lady Saville looked ill and worn, that her gayety was slightly hysterical, her careless cynicism was somewhat bitter. These various avocations left little room for attention to her father, and though Janet asked Tom twice to dinner, her husband was only present on one occasion. Still Captain Rowley held on contentedly enough, and had the gratification of escorting his daughter to call on the charming Miss Treadaway—when Tom's engagement to that young lady was announced—and also of attending the afternoon tea at which all Mrs. Palliser's more intimate friends assembled after the Drawing Room—including Sir Frederic Saville, who was most unpleasantly complimentary, and who brought with him his nephew, Lord Darrell, a good-humored and apparently good-natured young man, not unlike his uncle, only better and less animal looking; and also that well-known and severe "noblewoman," the Dowager Marchioness of Glendore, a distant relation of Palliser's, who had presented Janet—a tall, distinguished-looking woman—in spite of Darrell's declaration that she was "indecently bony." It was a joyous gathering to Janet; she had got through the rather dreaded ceremony without blundering—it was all over, and she read admiration and approval in her husband's eyes.

She had never looked so brilliant, as she leaned on her father's arm, presenting him with loving care to her new friends, and rejoicing in the pride and pleasure which beamed in his face.

CHAPTER IX.

DAPPLED SKIES.

BACK again in the sweet fresh country, among the lovely woods of Mervyn, clothed with the first flush of tender green, full of perfume and of song, and the unspeakable joyousness of renewed youth! How enchanting it was, Janet felt, to come home to such an abode, and to find the preparations which had been made for her and which proved the loving thought of her husband. Her own bedroom and one adjoining had been newly fitted up with exquisite taste and luxurious comfort—the latter as a sitting room, with a small piano and all appliances for writing and for study. She was almost frightened to think of the great happiness which had come into her life, of the bright future which lay smiling before her, and murmured to herself, with a momentary feeling of superstition, Cowper's rendering of the Latin poet,

> But oh! if fortune fill thy sail
> With more than a propitious gale,
> Take half thy canvas in.

The crown of all was Palliser's love. It might be a little exacting; he might be a little over-anxious that she should always look her best, and wear costly and becoming garments; but all these tokens of his

passionate attachment to her were precious in her sight.

They had stayed somewhat longer than they had intended in London, but it was difficult to break away from the invitations showered upon them, and Janet enjoyed society as she did everything else.

Moreover society liked Janet. She was fresh and natural, and free from shyness or *mauvaise honte*, because she was herself glad to please, but perfectly innocent of any attempt to create an effect. At some of the houses where they dined she met men of culture and high intelligence, to whose talk it was a delight to listen, and from even such as these, her bright face and eager attention attracted a good deal of notice.

Palliser, fastidious and hypercritical as he was, felt satisfied that he had reaped a deserved reward for his judgment and disinterestedness in selecting so sweet a wild flower to share his position, and even to adorn it.

Janet carried a host of new ideas away with her from the great intellectual caldron of London society, and cogitated many plans for her poor people and her schools. Fortunately the modest common sense which stood her in good stead all her life kept her from troubling her husband too soon about such matters, perceiving that he did not much care about what did not originate with himself.

He absorbed her time a good deal, and she had to refrain from asking her friend Mary Winyard to stay at the Hall, as she knew that Palliser could not be bored with ordinary women, and still preferred a *tête-à-tête* with herself to any society—save, indeed, that

of men connected with politics. But the Winyards were always welcome guests, when any social gatherings took place.

It was not easy, either, to see as much of her father as she wished, but in this matter Captain Rowley was quite reasonable—as fathers usually are, contrasting favorably with mothers.

These crumpled rose-leaves were of small importance. But even in the happy valley the demon of discontent will raise its hydra head, and presently Palliser began to want something to do. He did not care for fishing, the only sport available at that season, and he did not seem to care about riding, nor was he inclined to continue his instructions to Janet in the witching art.

"What are you about? Have you taken the house accounts from Mrs. Dunsford's jurisdiction? If so, we shall have a revolution."

"And a terrible collapse if I attempted such a herculean undertaking," she returned, smiling. "I have no such ambition."

"What is it, then?" coming over and leaning on the back of her chair.

Janet suddenly laid her hand on the page, while her neat little ears grew a deep pink.

"What—secrets, Janet?" said Palliser.

"Oh, no; read if you like, only you will laugh at me."

Palliser kissed the ear nearest him, and took up the book.

"Why, what is this about? 'Impressions.' Are you going to rush into print? I should prefer your

muddling the accounts," and he carried the book into a bay window which framed in a lovely view over the grounds and woods beyond.

Janet still sat at her writing table, shy and smiling.

"Oh, I see—impressions of your travels! You really write a nice, clear hand, Janet, but I should not call it pretty; it is a trifle too firm for feminine grace. I have seen very little of it. We were saved by propinquity from the foolery of love letters. Ah! 'Arrived at St. Remo, 27th; blue Mediterranean, cloudless skies, golden moonlight; olive trees—enchantment—Byron—Shelley,'" turning over the pages. "Um—um, Florence, Dante, Savanarola, Romola, Medici, Rome. Ah, 125 pages about Rome, my dear child. Every word of this has been said a dozen—nay, a dozen dozen times before. Pray do not be tempted to waste time and ink on these scribblings! I hope you will find more natural and womanly occupations." He threw the book from him with a lazy disapprobation.

Janet colored with wounded *amour propre*, but controlled herself. No doubt it was a silly production, yet it interested her to write, and she would not do battle over it.

"My poor book!" she exclaimed, lifting it from the chair on which it had fallen. "I daresay it seems beneath contempt to you, yet it is an innocent amusement enough, and I never intend to trouble anyone with it. The only person I have cared to show it to is my father. He used to know the south of Italy well, long ago. I wrote it partly for him."

"Ah, well! as you like. Only it is a cruel waste of time."

"It would be, if I had anything real to do, which I neglected for it;" and with smiling lips, which yet quivered a little, Janet put her book in an especial drawer and locked it.

Palliser looked at her thoughtfully.

"I too want employment. Time, like the pursuing Egyptians, has taken off his chariot wheels, and drives heavily. I almost wish we had stayed a little longer in town."

"Don't say so, Randal! It is heavenly here!"

"Put on your hat and come with me to the home farm. I think the old stable there would be the better for being rebuilt, and the cattle sheds are in a bad state. Put on your hat, Janet, and come with me to have a look at them."

"With pleasure. I shall be with you directly," and she left the room.

"Whatever happens she shall not make herself and me ridiculous in print, and scribblings of this kind are the beginning of troubles," said Palliser to himself as he drew his brows together with a look of annoyance, which faded gradually when his wife reappeared in a garden hat, which was large enough to be a parasol as well. Her sunny expression was so innocent of everything like opposition or self-seeking, that the demons of jealousy and temper dispersed before her smiling eyes, as night mists before the fresh light and air of morning.

"That is not a very becoming hat," said Palliser, parting with his ill-humor reluctantly.

"It is very comfortable, and not so bad."

"Do you know, Janet, you do not think enough

about dress?—a woman ought to make a serious study of it. You do not do yourself justice."

"My dear Randal," looking gravely at herself in a long glass, "I have exhausted my mental powers in attempting to reach a high standard, and I don't do so badly; perfection is not easily attained; give me time. Don't you like this frock?"

"It might be worse. Come along, we are wasting time."

"And it is such a heavenly morning," returned Janet, and they went out together.

She looked round her, rejoicing in the beauty and perfume and music which pervaded earth and air—he with eyes bent upon the gravel which had not been rolled to his satisfaction. "Look here!—here are two tufts of weeds, almost in the middle of the path! How those blind idiots could have gone over it without seeing them is absolutely incomprehensible!"

"Come across the grass, Randal, and then you will not see the weeds. It is a pity to let anything jar upon you on such a morning as this."

"You are the most desperately contented person I have ever met," exclaimed Palliser, yielding to her contagious brightness; "it is certainly a delicious day!" and they went on in silence, which he presently broke by observing, "I suppose your father is delighted with the genius and originality of your lucubrations, for I presume he has read your 'Impressions.'"

"Yes, of course. I fancy he is enchanted, though he tried to be severely critical. Dear dad, he kept the book a fortnight. I shall give it to him altogether

when I have added a little bit about Paris; of course, my father is neither as cultivated nor, perhaps, as intellectual as you are, and I am not at all shy about showing him my scribblings. Now, I am a little alarmed at the idea of your inspection, so you shall see no more of my impressions."

"I hope because they will not exist except in the unwritten tablets of your memory. For Heaven's sake, do not keep a journal."

"I do not intend to do so; it would be monotonous, for you have written one word—'happiness'—all over the pages of my life at present," and she gave him a glance full of gratitude and tenderness.

"Really, Janet, you can say a pretty thing very neatly," returned Palliser, smiling. "By the way, speaking of your father, I am rather surprised he likes to live in a dull inland village like Langford. Some seaside place, where he could see ships and meet old salts like himself, would be much more suited to him—Beachurst, for instance. Did he never think of Beachurst?"

"I never heard him say anything about it, but I could not imagine him anywhere but in Navarino Cottage; why, his garden is part of himself."

"Yes; but now he has lost you, he would be the better of some old chums to drop in and talk to him."

"Dearest Randal, he has not *lost* me. I see him constantly, and he has the vicar. I am going to see Mrs. Winyard to-day, and take some plants to my father—unless you want me to go anywhere with you."

"No, I shall go with you, after I have examined

the farm buildings. I should like to see Perkins, the architect, and get some idea of the cost of new ones."

"That will suit me exactly. I will drive you into Langford. Don't you think I am growing quite a good whip?"

"You are growing a conceited young woman."

So talking pleasantly, for Palliser was quite restored to serenity, they reached the farm, where much discussion ensued between the squire and his steward. Extensive improvements were planned and repairs projected, and Palliser was quite eager to go into Langford after luncheon, in order to put things in train.

Having left her husband at the architect's office, and arranged that he should meet her at Navarino Cottage, Janet stopped at the vicarage and found Mrs. Winyard sitting in the garden, her work basket on a little Japanese table beside her. She was looking very happy, and the lines of her gentle, care-worn face seemed less marked and softer than usual.

"This is sweet of you, my dear. I did not expect you to come so soon again," said the vicar's wife, as Janet bent down to kiss her.

"You know I love to come, Mrs. Winyard, but I cannot as often as I should like."

"No, I understand that. Mr. Palliser I daresay fancies he has the first claim on your time and attention," replied Mrs. Winyard, smiling. "Men are always a little grasping; they would not be fit for their work in life if they were not. Early friends are sometimes great bores to the newly married, especially to newly married men, as I tell Mary."

"Ah, Mrs. Winyard, I do so hope that Mary does

not think me careless or unkind. I sometimes fear I may seem so."

"She is not as reasonable as I am, my dear, but she has full faith in you; at all events, she will soon experience the little difficulties of early married days. My dear child has just accepted a gentleman of whom her father and myself quite approve. They will be married before the summer is over."

"Dear Mrs. Winyard," taking her hand, "how terribly you will miss her."

"I shall indeed," with a sigh, "but Gracie is growing very helpful and handy, and when I look at my Mary's happy face I cannot regret my loss."

Then followed a profoundly interesting narrative of the circumstances attending Mary's engagement, and an account of the future bridegroom and his position. He was a naval officer, holding a good government appointment in the Dockyard at Kingsport; a good deal older than Mary, but evidently the man of her choice.

"Not especially good-looking," added the mother, "but he has a gentlemanlike appearance and a strong sensible face. The vicar is very pleased, for he has formed a high opinion of his future son-in-law."

They talked for a considerable time on this interesting subject, for Janet was immensely taken up with the news. Mary had just gone on a visit to the sister of her intended, who lived in Devonshire, and intended to write from thence to her friend.

"I have overstayed my time," exclaimed Janet, looking at her watch. "I am to meet Mr. Palliser at my father's, so I must leave you. I will come over in a day or two and drive you back to tea at the Hall.

The grounds are quite delightful now, it would do you good; though, indeed, this garden is very sweet. I have always loved it! What news have you of Maurice?" she asked as she stood up to go.

"Very good, indeed. He was going with his colonel on a shooting expedition. He seems to be rather a favorite—not, as you can imagine, that Maurice says this in so many words. But we gather it from his accounts of himself and his life."

"Everyone must like him," exclaimed Janet. "Now, I must run away, Mrs. Winyard. I will send you a line to fix the day you will come to me."

Janet drove off rapidly, full of the news she had just heard, and already debating in her own mind what would be the best and most suitable present she could make her friend. "Randal must give her something nice, too. He is always generous and ready to give. Oh! I hope she may be as happy as I am—but that is almost impossible."

Arrived at the cottage Janet found that her father had started to walk to the Hall about an hour before, and that Palliser had not yet arrived. Janet felt greatly disappointed—she had not seen her father for several days, and she had a little scheme in her head for carrying him off to dine and stay the night; now that he had gone on his own account it would not be so easy to manage, for the old sailor was punctilious about his toilet and his "general orders" before leaving home, and did not care to stay away in an impromptu manner. She therefore descended from her pony carriage to inspect the removing of the plants she had brought to a sheltered spot in the garden,

and by the time this was accomplished Palliser appeared.

"Is it not provoking, Randal? My father has gone out to the Hall. I had hoped to take him back to dine and sleep."

"Oh, you did, did you?" he returned, in a somewhat dry tone; and Janet noticed that he expressed no regret—but that, she told herself the next moment, was a mere accident.

"I too was rather unfortunate in missing my man and waited in that confounded dusty office for some time before Perkins came in, and then, what do you think? He wanted to drag me off to look at some grand erection in the way of stables which he is building for my financial relative. The fellow talks too much; however, I have told him to come out to-morrow afternoon, and have a look at the old buildings. Come along; the ponies are impatient."

Janet gathered up the reins, and they drove swiftly but somewhat silently back, Palliser employing himself by making pencil notes in his memorandum book.

The short distance was soon accomplished, and Captain Rowley was discovered seated on a bench under the shade of a wide-spreading beech facing the house, with a pile of London papers beside him.

"Ha, ha, madam! come on board at last?" he cried, as he saw his daughter hastening across the lawn. "Thought I'd stroll out and see what had become of you."

"You dear old dad! I am so sorry you have had this long hot walk. We have just come from the cot-

tage; we'll have tea out here directly. Could you not stay over the night?"

"Impossible, my dear; couldn't stay without my togs; besides, I have promised the vicar to take 'pot luck' to-day, and talk over Mary's wedding. Hey! heard the news?" and they plunged into an animated conversation about the coming marriage, until Palliser joined them, to whom the news was imparted. He seemed quite pleased, Janet remarked, and talked with more of his old amiability—a change suggesting to her the difference which had of late developed itself.

"You must help me to choose a nice present for Mary," said Janet to her husband.

"I suppose so," he returned, "and supplement it by one from myself, eh?"

"I hope you will, dear Randal."

Captain Rowley then pointed out a paragraph which had escaped his notice, in which the public was informed that the member for Southshire had returned from Vichy immensely improved in health and vigor.

"By Jove, that old man will live forever!" cried Palliser impatiently, as he set down his cup. "And he is really not the slightest good to the county. Why do not old fellows see the wisdom of abdicating when they cannot guide their own team, to say nothing of public affairs?"

"Quite true," added Captain Rowley. "When one hasn't a strong grip for the rudder spokes, he should give up to one who has. But, Palliser, no one likes to give up——" and they fell into a discussion on registration and the balance of parties in the county.

"Well, my dear father," put in Janet, when there

was a pause, "if you can't stay to-day, when will you come to dine and stay a day or two? You have not been here for quite ten days."

"You see, Janet, I am aware I am on the superannuated list, so I don't want to parade my fogeyism too often."

"What nonsense! Isn't it nonsense, Randal? Come on Thursday and stay till Saturday. I know you like your own church."

"I hope you will, Captain Rowley," returned Palliser, but a little coldly.

"Thanks, my dear boy, I shall be delighted."

"If you will excuse me," continued Palliser, "I will go and write a letter or two. I have just had a long epistle from Darrell which requires a reply. There is a letter from my sister too; I shall leave it on my writing table for you, Janet. Good-morning, Captain Rowley, in case I do not see you till Thursday." They shook hands, and Palliser walked quickly back to the house.

"Is he all right?" asked Captain Rowley, nodding in the direction of his vanishing son-in-law.

"Yes, quite right, I think. Why do you ask?"

"I can hardly say; but he doesn't seem up to concert pitch. But then, a man can't be always in the full blaze of good humor, and you are too sensible a girl to ask him what is the matter. If he is not inclined to tell of his own accord, asking won't make him. Ah! this is a lovely place. I wonder if an old fellow might smoke his pipe of peace here?"

"Of course you may, dear—or shall I get you some cigars?"

"No, thank you. It may not be elegant, but I love my old pipe. Now, my dear, don't let me be late for the vicar's dinner."

"I will take care, dear. I will tell Dickson to order the dogcart for six, that will give you time enough—they dine at quarter to seven still?"

Captain Rowley nodded, and continued to smoke in a luxurious fashion, talking from time to time of his son Tom's improved prospects, of his return from his wedding tour, and Mrs. Tom's amiable wish that her father-in-law should pay them a visit.

"Not just now though, Janet. No, I couldn't put up with London when the garden is looking its best. Ah, my dear! I miss that stroll round with you in the early morning, while the tea was drawing," and the old man sighed and resumed his pipe.

"Dearest dad!" cried Janet, with moist eyes, "I am afraid you miss me terribly. I cannot bear to think of it."

"Hoot—stuff and nonsense," said the captain stoutly. "I can tell you that when I sit down with my book and pipes, it's uncommonly pleasant to think that when I am no longer here to look after my girl, you'll have a better fellow than I am to take care of you, and a beautiful home for yourself and your children! Don't trouble about the old dad; he'll have a fine peaceful time of it for the rest of his days."

Janet slipped her hand into his and they sat thus for several minutes in sympathetic silence. Then Captain Rowley began to talk of his garden and how he intended to place the plants his daughter had left for

him. So the time melted away, until the sedate Dickson came to say the dogcart was at the door.

Janet accompanied her father to the entrance and saw him start homeward. Then she returned slowly to the house. Not finding Palliser in the library, she went upstairs to dress for dinner.

"Do you think this becomes me as well as my green with the white lace?" asked Janet of Mrs. Raynes, as she stood before the glass when her toilet was finished.

"Well, ma'am, I should say more so, though the green suits you well, too, but for your complexion; and in daylight, the pale lilac and just the slight garniture of black Brussels lace is the very thing with your hair and color."

"I fear I am growing too fond of dress, Raynes!"

"Oh! dear no, ma'am; if I may make the remark, you used not to care enough about it. A lady like you ought to think a deal of herself; the more she thinks of herself the more others think of her."

"That is a dreadful doctrine, Raynes."

"But it is true, ma'am. I well remember when I was in young Lady Compton's service she was——"

"There is the bell!" exclaimed Janet, not sorry to escape Raynes' rather long-winded experiences.

Palliser was waiting for her in the bay window of the smaller drawing room, and as she approached she felt that her dress was satisfactory from the softened expression that came over his brow and into his eyes while he offered her his arm, and pressed hers slightly to him, as they walked into the dining room together.

"I find, Janet, I must go up to town on Thursday. Darrell writes that they—that is as many of our party

who were in Cashmere together as are in town—are going to give a dinner to Carthew, the man who was chief of our expeditions in Cashmere and managed everything for us. He has just come over, and I should like to pay him the compliment of being present. You will explain all this to your father. I will try to return on Friday if I possibly can."

"Yes, of course, Randal. It will be nice for me to have him while you are away, but come back as soon as you can."

"Very well. I think I shall bring Darrell back with me. He wants to talk to you about a yachting expedition. He has started a new yacht, and wants us to take a cruise with him round the west coast of Scotland."

"It would be perfectly delightful," cried Janet.

"You are a tolerable sailor?" said Palliser doubtfully.

"I am a very good one. Don't you remember how rough it was when we went for a few days to Corsica, and I kept perfectly well?"

"True. It could not do you any harm. It will help us over the summer, for however charming the place and yourself, there is a certain monotony. So you must talk it over with Darrell. I rather like Darrell. He's a bit wild, but is steadying down. Have you read Gertrude's letter?"

"Not yet."

"Well, I will bring it to you. She does not seem very happy. Saville went off to Norway after a very short spell of Scotland, and she has been rather unsettled since."

"I am so sorry; are you going to ask her down here?"

"Yes; later—and the boys, if Alec passes."

"If not, poor boy, he will want something to cheer him up."

"Of course, in any case. Gertrude is immensely fond of him, but I don't fancy he is very bright."

They rose from table, and Palliser brought the letter. It was short and said very little. She was in London waiting for her boy to go with her somewhere—probably to the Isle of Wight.

After a few words respecting it, Janet proposed a stroll by moonlight, and wrapping a lace scarf round her she slipped her arm through Palliser's and they strolled out into the soft darkness of the fresh, fragrant night, while he gradually began to speak of the future, of his strong wish to represent the county.

"You see, one tires of everything that has not a touch of reality in it," he said. "Now to be an active politician is an ambition worthy of any Englishman. I have tried a great many things, but nothing lasts. We must make ourselves popular, Janet."

"Certainly," exclaimed Janet, with vivid interest; "or rather increase your popularity. You are very much liked already. How I should enjoy the excitement of an election."

"If I were elected it would entail a rather rackety life for the larger half of the year. I must have a house in town. I suppose you would not consider that an attendant evil, eh, Janet?"

"I am not quite sure. I love the Hall, and I love Langford; but I found London delightful, too."

They talked confidentially together for some time. To Janet it was a peculiarly happy hour. She felt that her husband was speaking to her as to a second self; indeed, that he was barely conscious for the moment that she was a separate individual, so engrossed was he in his own projects and hopes, and Janet was far too eagerly sympathetic to perceive or care how much she was overlooked, only that he might bring his ambition—his noble ambition, as she considered it—to a successful fulfillment. It is well that those we love believe in us and view us through love's rose-colored spectacles. Colder and more impartial observers might have termed this noble ambition vanity writ large.

. . . . . .

Captain Rowley readily excused Palliser's absence, and greatly enjoyed his *tête-à-tête* visit to his daughter, which extended to the fourth day.

"Why will you not stay till Monday, dear father?" she asked, the morning he was going to leave.

"For a couple of reasons. First, I am quite sure that Palliser would rather come back to a duet than to a trio, and have you all to himself after this your first separation, and I am quite of his opinion; secondly, I prefer my own little den to any other place. Honestly, if I could have you on a visit to me, instead of coming on a visit to you, I should prefer it; but that cannot be. I'll ask the curate to come and dine and have a hit at backgammon; we'll be as jolly as sandboys."

But Janet prepared herself for the joy of receiving Palliser in vain. Instead came a horrid telegram

warning her not to expect him till the day but one following.

The evening was cruelly long and unaccountably melancholy. Janet told herself a dozen times that she was a weak fool. But a sudden gray cloud, with a chill and moaning breeze, seemed to have come up out of the dim future and wrapped her in its depressing mantle.

CHAPTER X.

"CRUMPLED ROSE-LEAVES."

WITH daylight came common sense. Janet sent a few pleasant, affectionate lines to her husband, and busied herself about many things for the greater part of the day, delighting her father's heart by going to dine with him.

As she arrived two hours at least before her father's dinner time, he was enabled to ask the vicar, his wife, and the daughter who was to replace Mary, the curate, and an old employee of the bank, a crony of the host's, to an impromptu little dinner, which was all the more delightful because of its unexpectedness—for which Captain Rowley inspected the making of the curry and Mrs. Palliser of Mervyn Hall laid the cloth and arranged the beautiful fruit and flowers. It was quite a lively repast, and the hospitable old sailor was in his glory.

This was much better than moping at home alone, thought Janet, as she looked around, and then a slight feeling of surprise passed through her mind as she felt how much she loved the little old cottage which had been her world. No, delightful as her beautiful new home was, it should never banish the old one from her heart.

Palliser was late in returning. Another telegram

told Janet he had missed the train, so dinner was turned into supper, and about nine o'clock the sound of wheels made her heart beat wildly. With some difficulty she kept herself from running to the hall, to throw herself into his arms, but her instinctive knowledge of his thoroughly English horror of scenes of any display of affection before the servants held her back. The next moment she heard his voice speaking to someone—someone who was an equal—she knew the tone—and a sudden sense of disappointment fell upon her.

Then the door opened and Palliser crossed the threshold, saying as he did so:

"I have brought you a guest whom you will be pleased to see," as if to warn her against demonstrativeness, while behind him the broader, squarer figure and bold, frank face of Lord Darrell appeared.

And she was to welcome him instead of relieving her heart by a burst of tears.

"This is an unexpected pleasure." She struggled to say it brightly. "I hardly hoped you would come with Mr. Palliser, though he promised to persuade you to pay us a visit." She was quickly recovering herself.

"Many thanks, Mrs. Palliser. It was a sudden thought on Palliser's part—and I was very pleased to come. Sorry we kept you waiting. What a salubrious spot Mervyn Hall must be. You look more blooming even than you did in town, in spite of the hot weather."

"Or seems so," put in Palliser. "You can't fancy how ghostly most of the women looked after the

racket of the season, especially coming in on the fag end of it as I did."

"And still more especially, considering the roses and lilies you left behind," added Darrell, with a good-humored smile.

"It was amusing though," resumed Palliser. "I went to three dinners and the other days I was in the Strangers' Gallery. Heard Gladstone and Hartington, and several howling Irishmen."

"And longed to add to the clamor?" said Janet, slipping her hand into his, as she thought unseen by Darrell.

"No," replied Palliser, pressing it hastily and instantly releasing it. "Not for a long time—not till I have mastered the shibboleth. Come, Darrell, let us get rid of as much dust as we can before we sit down to dinner or supper."

. . . . . .

Janet walked to the window, and gazing out into the moonlight took herself severely to task for her own fancifulness.

But why—why did Randal bring this man, or any man back with him? If he had even come to-morrow; if they had had even one evening to stroll out and talk all by themselves. But she must not expect a man to be satisfied with the monotony of tenderness and affection which filled her own life to overflowing. Indeed she felt that a man would not be worth much who could be so content; she might in time even weary of it herself. But why—why did he bring Darrell with him?

By the time the gentlemen joined her Janet was

almost herself again, and the trio talked gayly over their repast, the men retailing all the latest gossip for her benefit, and explaining Darrell's yachting plans.

His new vessel had only just been launched, and the fittings and furniture were not yet complete.

"Then," continued Lord Darrell, "I should like to take a short trial trip to see how she behaves at sea before I venture to take so distinguished a passenger," bowing to Janet, "on board, so it may be quite the first or second week of July before we can hoist the Blue Peter."

"A very good time," said Palliser, passing the claret. "We'll have a thunder-storm or two, but we have brave hearts, have we not, Janet?"

"No doubt," cried Darrell. "Mrs. Palliser looks if she were game right through; now as to the party—I should like a few choice spirits—I haven't room for many. Who would *you* suggest?"

"I have no suggestion to make," said Janet, coloring. "I do not know anyone well enough to judge whether they would stand the test of being shut up with me, unless indeed Lady Saville."

"My aunt?" cried Darrell; "excellent. I did think of asking her, she is always charming; my uncle is inaccessible, so let him remain. Now, Palliser, name some man—though the selection ought to go the other way round."

"There's Danby and Fairfax—and—oh, lots of fellows, you know best. You ought to choose your own guests."

"So I shall—some of them. Danby might do. Come, Mrs. Palliser, have you no fancy man?"

"I think not," returned Janet, with a smile.

"That is impossible; try, try, try again."

"Well, then, I used to enjoy talking to Sir Peter Lyons, whom we met at——"

"What, Lyons!" interrupted Darrell. "Why, this is tremendous! Do you want to sink my poor little craft with such a weight of metal as Sir Peter Lyons, the great anthropologist? Pray pass me the water, Palliser, I am overcome. Do you mean to say that you ventured to talk calmly face to face with that monster of learning and philosophy? I quite stand in awe at *you*, my dear Mrs. Palliser."

"He is exceedingly nice, and concealed his appalling acquirements successfully. Indeed, I found him quite kind and sympathetic."

"I daresay you exercised some spell over him, but for mere commonplace creatures such as Palliser and myself, it would be too terrible a prospect. I should feel as if I had caught an elephant in a butterfly net—no, my dear Mrs. Palliser, anyone but Lyons.

"Very well," said Janet, laughing. "I give up Sir Peter, and feel ashamed of my blunder; but, really, I liked him immensely."

"I only hope Mrs. Palliser will not develop into a lion-hunter," said her husband. "This idea of hers is rather prophetic," and they went on to laugh and talk over the proposed yachting party, till Janet, finding it later than she thought, said good-night and left them to their cigars.

"O Randal," she exclaimed, when at last she had a word with him alone, "*why* did you bring him down with you? To-morrow would have done as well."

"Eh—why? Oh, I don't know! He rather wanted to come, and can only stay two or three days. I thought you'd like Darrell."

"Yes, I do, but——"

"I saw old Digby when I was in town," interrupted Palliser, quite heedless of her tender reproach, "and he is certainly looking better, but he told me he was pretty well sick of active life, only he wanted to keep the county open for some better Liberal than himself. I don't fancy he thinks I have an idea of standing."

And Janet listened eagerly as her husband enlarged on this all-important topic, while she blushed at her own folly in expecting Palliser to attach the same importance to his return and the joy of meeting as she did.

The following morning Darrell was carried off to the home farm to inspect the intended improvements and interview the architect, who was already measuring and sketching plans.

Janet therefore had her morning to herself, and added some pages to her record of those delightful days of travel and of bliss of which she was anxious to preserve her impressions; also to write a second long letter to her friend Mary, asking for information as to her plans, as she (Janet) feared her yachting expedition might prevent her being present at the wedding.

The gentlemen were a little late for luncheon, and Lord Darrell was profuse in his apologies.

"What a charming place this is!" he continued. "It must be more than ten years since I saw it, and I had forgotten it. It is so thoroughly English. The trees are magnificent. The Pallisers must always have

had lots of ready money or the woods would have suffered more than they have done."

"I believe your own place is beautiful, Lord Darrell," said Janet.

"It is in a pretty country, and has the advantage of a small river running through it; but it is altogether of the villa order, small and pretty. My grandfather, the first lord, bought it. We have not lived on the land like the Pallisers, a thousand—or is it two thousand years?"

"Say five hundred, and perhaps you will be over the mark," returned his host, smiling.

"No matter, you are the real aristocrat. My people were of the cottonocracy—still they managed to make things pretty comfortable for me."

"You ought to see the show place of Southshire, Darrell; that is, if you have never seen it—Castle Clare."

"No. I meet the owner occasionally, but he has never had the sense to invite me."

"We can ride over this afternoon, if you like. There is a good deal of shade all the way, and we need not start till four."

"Very good. I should like to see it. You'll come with us, Mrs. Palliser? Being country-bred, of course you ride."

"I have ridden very little, but I enjoy it immensely. I only fear I might be rather in your way."

"Nonsense, my dear Mrs. Palliser. It would be the greatest addition to our pleasure."

"Perhaps, Randal," she said, "I might ride that nice quiet old horse I used to have when Lady Saville was here. He would want no management."

"No; I don't fancy you are practiced enough to ride with Darrell, who is one of the crack riders in Leicestershire. I am afraid Mrs. Palliser began too late to do much in the equestrian line."

"I don't believe it. She is the very cut of a horsewoman. Don't mind him, Mrs. Palliser. Come with us, and *I'll* look after you."

"I wish you would let me try, Randal," said Janet imploringly. "I did so enjoy the rides I had. I should have asked you before, only you did not seem inclined to ride yourself."

"What a hard-hearted fellow you must be, Palliser, to say 'no' to your wife. You come down in your habit at four, Mrs. Palliser, and depend upon it you'll find your horse ready."

Janet glanced at her husband, and noticed a displeased look in his eyes, which she had learned to know.

"I hate to see women on horseback. They rarely ride well, and when they do they look masculine, which is always hideous," he said contemptuously.

"My dear fellow, you are talking rank heresy. A woman never looks more charming than when swaying easily to the motion of her horse. Look at your sister."

"Yes, I know the fuss people used to make about her. But I have no wish that my wife should resemble her."

"Oh! I grant that it is better that Mrs. Palliser should be herself than resemble anyone else, but Lady Saville is admirable on horseback."

"She is, indeed," exclaimed Janet. "It is a pleasure to look at her."

"Well," observed Palliser shortly, "I am sure it

would not be a pleasure to look at you—in the present state of your experience; so for the present do not attempt to ride. Hereafter——"

"Oh, very well!" returned Janet good-humoredly. "If you leave me a loophole of hope that you will undertake to perfect me in—what is the usual number? —six, or let us say twelve lessons, given in the strictest privacy of our own park, I shall be content, and will not insist on making an exhibition of myself to-day," and she stole a glance at her husband, hoping to read some loving acknowledgment in his eyes, but the cold, annoyed look had not left them. A swift sense of fear crisped Janet's nerves. Was he going to be cross and easily offended? Was she going to be uncertain of herself—of her position with him? She must not allow such a weakness to master her.

"By Jove, Palliser, you are on the highroad to ruin," cried Darrell, "if your wife gives up to you in that fashion."

"It is not a great renunciation," returned Palliser icily; and rising from the table, he added, "I shall order the horses then at fonr, and if you will excuse me, I have some letters to write."

"Of course, it's all right."

"Will you come and sit under the trees, Lord Darrell?" asked Janet. "I think it is cooler than indoors. Almost all our sitting rooms are on the sunny side of the house."

"It will be delightful."

Darrell lit his cigar, while Janet put on her hat in the hall, and took a mesh of delicate knitting to occupy her hands while she talked.

"This is heavenly," said Darrell, settling himself in a deck chair, from which he had a good "three-quarter" view of Mrs. Palliser's expressive face. "There is a wonderful air of repose about you, do you know? It makes a fellow wonder why he ever bothers about anything—and that knitting, or whatever it is, takes off the dreary look of idleness. I'm not idle myself. Still I cannot cheat Satan. He finds a heap of mischief for my busy hands to do."

"Then you must occupy them more diligently with what is *not* mischievous, Lord Darrell."

"Yes; but with what? There's the difficulty."

He paused and smoked a minute in silence.

"Now," he resumed, "I am going to read you a lecture. I am one of the family, you know, in a sort of way—shall I say a sort of cotton back to the superior satin face, and Palliser we must allow has a most superior gloss—but, my dear kinswoman, you give him his head a good deal too much. He'll get out of hand altogether; you should have stuck to the riding, whatever happened."

"What! vex Randal about such a trifle?" cried Janet.

"Nothing is a trifle that establishes a precedent," returned Darrell sententiously. "The next time you want anything you'll find it ten times harder to get it. My dear Mrs. Palliser, men are great brutes and born tyrants, every man of them; the more a woman gives in to us the less we value them—a melancholy fact, but the truth. Look at my uncle Saville; his wife worshiped the ground he walked upon, and see what came of it."

"That I do not know—but I fear they might be happier."

"Well, yes; they might."

"But," continued Janet with fire, "you could never compare Sir Frederic Saville with Mr. Palliser."

"No; Palliser is a superior article altogether. Yes, I really mean it. A high-bred gentleman—but don't give in to him too much."

"You ought to be ashamed of preaching rebellion to the wife of your friend," said Janet, smiling. "What should you feel or do if you were married and your wife insisted on riding, in opposition to you?"

"If I ever cared enough for any woman to marry her I should want her to ride with me every day."

"Never mind that—put yourself in Randal's place."

"Well, do you know, I almost wish I could," he returned, with a frank amused look that made Janet laugh.

"Suppose then I had an objection to my wife's riding and she persisted in it, why, I'd swear a big swear, I daresay, and the next time I wanted to be backed up in any way I'd think my wife a backer worth having. If she yielded like an angel, as you did just now, I'd give her a dozen kisses on the first opportunity—I'm rather an affectionate fellow—and insist on having my own way next time we differed, more tyrannically than ever. That's human nature, my dear Mrs. Palliser."

Janet was greatly amused; she was blessed with a sense of humor—a precious gift which is the salt of the mind, saving from insipidity, and drawing out the true flavor of all mental comestibles.

Then Palliser was seen coming to join them, and the conversation was at an end.

Darrell stayed a day or two longer than he intended, and seemed quite happy in spite of the absence of sport or other amusement. Janet liked him greatly: he was blunt, yet never rude, and his candid views respecting the true value of things were original and diverting.

Palliser liked him also, yet his brow often contracted when he noticed how rapidly his young wife was growing intimate and at home with a man who was a little feared by the society among which he moved, for his outspoken contempt of shams; still his evident pleasure in her society flattered the husband's vanity, which was a large ingredient in his character, and man's company is always a gain to a man when the first effervescence of a love fit is over.

All particulars of the yachting expedition were fixed. Lady Saville willingly accepted Darrell's invitation, and her young sons went off to join their father in Norway.

The new buildings proved a godsend in providing occupation and interest, which Janet shared heartily. Palliser rode out more frequently, but when Janet smilingly reminded him of his implied promise to teach her, she met with a curt refusal, and a little wounded she did not return to the subject.

Time flew fast and the time drew near for their cruise. Janet found she could not be home in time for her friend's wedding, and was obliged to content herself by choosing a handsome and useful present for her when they went to London to get some suitable

yachting garments before joining the the *Sea Bird* at Southampton.

Having neither the experience nor the pen of that most picturesque writer, Mr. W. Black, we will not attempt to follow the cruise of Lord Darrell's party. The yacht was pronounced a thing of beauty and of comfort, as they sped along before a brisk breeze, or lay with scarce any motion on the smooth surface of a summer sea, glided under grim beetling rocks, or floated through the narrow entrance of some inlet of the sea, running far inland and locked in by mountains.

The guests were well assorted, and their patience and good breeding stood the strain of nearly three weeks' constant companionship remarkably well; but, perhaps, when they cast anchor at Oban, and most of the party took the night mail to London, they enjoyed the breaking up almost as much as they did the gathering together of their gay party.

Perhaps none enjoyed the cruise so much as Janet. It was a totally new experience to her, and she was popular with all her fellow passengers. She thoroughly appreciated the sea and the fine coast scenery, but looking back over the pleasant days when she sat down to the reprehensible occupation of scribbling her "Impressions," she recollected a good many unpleasant ones, when Palliser was considerably ruffled, she was not always quite sure why. Certainly, when she neglected to keep her veil down, and was tanned by sun and air, for fair skins are apt to become red under such treatment, he was amazed by her carelessness; no doubt it was careless on her part to neglect

her looks for a moment, and her husband's anxiety that she should look her best was flattering, but at the same time a little tiresome.

These little gusts and eddies of temper were sweeping up misty cloudlets from the horizon of the future which shrouded the heavenly light of other days—days so near in time, so far away by the measurement of the heart. Still, she would not allow herself to be morbid or fanciful. Randal loved her dearly, and that was enough. For the rest, if he had the serious interest of a political career, he would have no time for faddles.

They had, without much difficulty, persuaded Lady Saville to return with them; and at Janet's suggestion Palliser invited her boys to spend the holidays at Mervyn Hall. Palliser was certainly attached to his sister, yet sometimes spoke to her with a degree of harshness that surprised Janet. Moreover, she often said to herself, "If Tom dared to address me in such a a tone I should pull him up very sharply—but he never did."

Another little crumpling of her rose-leaves was occasioned by her wish to invite her brother and his wife for a brief visit to the Hall before the summer was quite over.

In truth she was not particularly anxious for their company; though always friendly with her brother she was not deeply attached to him. The differences between them were too fundamental for intimacy; but she knew so much courtesy was due to him. Now she found it required a desperate effort of courage to open the subject to her husband. She knew he did not par-

ticularly like Tom, and would consider Mrs. Tom hopelessly *bourgeoise*. Still it was her duty to ask his leave at any rate, and she would. As she made this valiant resolution, it flashed across her mind that had she been in her old home—her real home, as she felt it to be—she would certainly out of respect and politeness have asked her father's permission to invite a guest—but she was perfectly assured of the reply. Then came the question—if Mervyn Hall was hers as well as Randal's, if she were the mistress as he was the master, why did she feel this hesitation? The answer came quickly. Everything in it was her husband's; the very clothes she wore were his gift; she was penniless and metaphorically naked, but for him; therefore she could *not* be his equal. True, she might be his heart's delight, he might love and cherish her, indeed, he had always been chivalrous and generous, but though she was his wife, and had a legal right to share his life and all that he had, she was but a pensioner on his bounty; and the eternal materialism of things forbids belief in the fable of equality when it does not stand firmly on the solid feet of £ *s. d.*, or equivalent advantages.

These were unworthy thoughts; perhaps she was naturally low-minded, but for a moment she realized what unspeakable degradation it must ever be to the individual who is completely dependent on another, no matter how dear or how good, except only a parent. Still, dependence on a husband was not considered dependence; and who was she, to set her uneasy fancies against the wisdom of the past, the prevalent opinions of the present? Only she must not be exacting; she must not worry Randal; the tenderness of

her affection would prevent that; but also because the paymaster had a right to turn round and say at any moment, "This or that must not be."

"But a look at his dear face will banish all these crooked fancies," thought Janet, as the sound of Palliser's voice reached her from the garden beneath. She would cast all her doubts and fancies to the winds, and ask her kind, generous husband for what she wished. If he refused she would be sorry, but she would have done her duty.

She locked away her writing and descended to meet him. He was giving some directions to the gardener and looking well and bright.

"Come with us," he cried, as she descended the steps from the drawing-room window; "I think this corner might be cleared of trees a little; it would give a peep at the old church tower, and make a pretty vista."

Janet accompanied him across the grounds, entering with warm interest into his plans. After some discussion, and giving definite instructions to the head gardener, they returned to the house, and halted in the drawing room, expecting the gong to sound for luncheon.

"Randal," said Janet, coming to where he had thrown himself into a lounging chair, and smoothing his hair gently, "I should like to ask Tom and his wife here for a few days before the shooting begins."

"Your brother! Here!" There was horror in his voice.

"Yes, I was afraid it would bore you; but I want to be a little polite, and they need not stay long."

"Good Heavens! They cannot stay less than a week, and it will be an infernal bore. I would rather have Captain Rowley here—a good deal."

"Why, Randal, you don't think my dear father a bore?" in a tone of dismay.

"Wonderfully little of a bore, considering his age and the life he has led. Come, Janet, don't be so weak as to imagine your geese swans, because they are *your* geese. You are by no means without sense—pray use it."

Janet felt dazed for an instant; she honestly believed that Palliser was fond of her father and liked his society. Tears came to her eyes, but she forced them back; she was rapidly learning the necessity of conciliation.

"Of course, you do not feel toward him quite as I do," she said, with a quick sigh; "but if it is not *too* great a bore, I should like Tom and his wife to pay us a visit while Gertrude is here; she is so kind and helpful, and——"

"She is a deuced deal too sympathetic, and all that sort of thing," interrupted Palliser sternly; "at any rate, for her own good. I hope *you* will not go off on that tack, Janet; it leads women into all sorts of weakness."

"I fear I am naturally sympathetic, Randal, but I shall try to be stern and stony. Well, if it is intolerable to you, we will say no more about Tom's visit, at present; only I think you are a little too much afraid of trifling discomforts; and remember a week's endurance would set you free, for a year at least, from any repetition of it."

"A year! Am I to have these people once a year?"

"Not if you object so much; there, we will say no more about it."

She turned away, more distressed than vexed, and went to the window by which they had just entered, Palliser was silent for a minute, then he said harshly:

"Don't be silly and ill-tempered, Janet. I don't like to be bored; no man does. I naturally express what I feel to you, but it is as well to ask your brother and his wife here while we are comparatively alone; only make it clearly understood that it is to be a week's visit."

"Very well, I will write this afternoon." There was a slight tremor in her voice, for she had been thinking what a revelation Palliser's present view of her father had been to her.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, with much disgust, "you are not weeping, are you, over this rubbish?"

"Certainly not," said Janet, suddenly restored to firmness and composure, and turning to face him, with head erect, "my tears are not quite so ready."

Something in her tone startled Palliser, but before he could speak the gong sounded, he rose and opened the door for his wife, saying as she passed, "Is there a dash of the vixen in you, Janet?"

"I don't know. It might be an amusing variety," she returned good-humoredly. "Too much sweetness is cloying."

"Ah! I do not want to be amused in that style. The sweetness is still very sweet!" said Palliser with a

smile, and they went to table in a more harmonious mood.

Janet was, however, almost ashamed of her own sense of relief, when a couple of days after the post brought her a reply from Mrs. Tom Rowley. They were much pleased by the invitation, but reluctantly obliged to refuse. Tom had just had rather a long holiday for their wedding trip, and was now obliged to stay in town while his partner took his family to the seaside.

With laughing eyes Janet handed the letter to Palliser, who, on returning it to her, observed with mock gravity, "Virtue has its reward."

But though this slight ruffling of matrimonial bliss passed over with apparent little or no bad result, the idea that the dear old father was already more or less a nuisance to her husband pressed heavily on Janet's heart. Formerly his kindly pleasure in talking to the captain, in drawing him out and listening to his stories, or better still, in arguing with him as if he had the highest opinion of his judgment, was a source of the purest joy to her. He was more sympathetic, more considerate and respectful than Tom, by a long way. Why should he change? Certainly he was always polite and observant to her father, but did he find him that most abhorred thing, "a bore"? If such a mental revolution had taken place, what state of mind, of affection, would be lasting?

Janet feared she should never enjoy the old man's visits thoroughly again—not with this consciousness that her husband was wishing him away. Then came the recollection that Palliser had suggested Captain

Rowley finding a more suitable abode at Beachurst! Did that mean a wish to get rid of him? Impossible! She would not think about it. Dwelling on small worries only warped the mind and magnified mole-hills.

Then Palliser soon after called on his father-in-law, and himself invited him to dine and stay the night. So the sun shone again in a blue sky for Janet.

Meanwhile, Lady Saville's sons were visitors after Janet's own heart. The eldest was a mixture of father and mother; like the former physically, with a good deal of the latter's refinement and charm of manner. He was easy-going and sure of himself, and was soon on terms of the happiest intimacy with his aunt Palliser. It seemed so droll to her having a nephew barely two years her junior. The second boy was more than four years younger than Alexander, and extremely fond of fishing. This had been Captain Rowley's chief sport, as it often is with men who cannot afford horses or tips to gamekeepers, and the boy was delighted to have his guidance and hints, though the sturdy old sailor found that his own staying powers had considerably diminished.

On the whole the summer and autumn passed quickly and smoothly. Palliser diligently cultivated popularity to such an extent that he was absolutely civil and hospitable to his relative the banker and his family.

Lawn-tennis parties, picnics, dinners, succeeded each other, and still Lady Saville lingered on in her comfortable quarters, to Janet's sincere satisfaction, as she gradually grew to feel that her sister-in-law was really the one person she could depend upon.

Of Pallister she was never sure; sometimes he spoke and acted as if he was bitterly annoyed with her, and she quickly learned that nothing offended him more than to ask him the reason, especially as he had none to give. Then again he had fits of passionate fondness, quite as unaccountable. These alternations impressed Janet with the unpleasant conviction that she had no sort of sacredness in his eyes, as some women are taught that the kisses of to-day are no guarantee against the curses of to-morrow.

Palliser, however, was a well-bred man, and had enough surface self-control never to be guilty of absolute rudeness. He managed, however, to show his feelings very successfully without the coarser indication of blows and curses.

Before the winter had begun Janet had learned to guard both eyes and lips, her facial muscles, the intonations of her voice, while she struggled desperately to hold on to the affection she firmly believed existed, and to blind her own judgment by telling herself that her own tact and perception were at fault, that she would improve in time, and that these clouds of misunderstanding would fade away before the sunshine of that love which already lay a-dying.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE DAY IS COLD AND DARK AND DREARY."

NOVEMBER was upon them; not dark and drear as that month so often is, but clear and crisp, if rather colder than it usually is at the beginning of winter. Hunting was already in full swing, and Lady Saville had at last induced Sir Frederic to decide on a winter residence. Their own place was let on lease to a great China merchant, and their town house was on the books of more than one West End house agent. They were, in fact, expiating a career of more than usual folly and extravagance, which would have ended still more disastrously, had not Palliser come to their assistance, not only with money, but with other efficient help, for he was naturally shrewd in all matters of business, and though ready to spend freely of that which he possessed abundantly, he had an instinctive sense of the value of money.

He was very anxious that his sister should spend the winter with her husband, as they had been really, though not ostensibly, separated for the last year, and Palliser had an almost morbid dread of scandal.

Janet gradually came to understand that Lady Saville had been guilty of some imprudence. What it was she did not exactly know, for she was too loyal to ask questions, and too much attached to her sister-in-

law to believe that it was caused by anything except Sir Frederic's harshness and coldness.

As, under their circumstances, life was less irksome abroad than in England, Lady Saville decided that Pau would suit them best. There, Sir Frederic would find golf and hunting; and some of her own more congenial acquaintances intended wintering there. Her eldest boy, to her great delight, had passed for Sandhurst, and Palliser undertook to look after the second, who was at Eton, and invited him to pass Christmas at the Hall.

Lady Saville persuaded Janet to come up to town with her to assist in the rather extensive shopping which was absolutely necessary, she thought, before she went into what she pathetically called banishment; and though Palliser at first objected, he finally yielded to his sister's persuasions.

"After all, shopping is a grand resource," said Lady Saville one afternoon, as they were sitting at tea in the dining room of the Eaton Square house, where they were staying, after a long day, "and the change of occupation and scene is reviving. You were looking awfully moped last week. Tell me—are you quite well? I wish you would confide in me, Janet. Something worries you; there is a subtle change in you. I feel it, though I cannot define it!"

Janet looked up surprised. Lady Saville seldom spoke so seriously, and there was an unusual touch of feeling in her voice.

"Thank you, Gertrude," she returned, roused to sudden caution, for she was determined not to lift the mask. "I feel perfectly well, and as to being worried,

I am sometimes, a little, but with myself; I am, I fancy, wanting in tact and experience, and make mistakes which——"

"Nonsense, Janet! for a young creature, brought up like a recluse, you are wonderfully self-possessed. I don't see what mistakes you make; you are rapidly developing into a woman of the world. I should greatly like to give you a few hints—a little advice, if you will not think me taking a liberty, but when I see you treading the same path I have stumbled along myself"—she paused.

"Say anything you like," returned Janet, somewhat dejectedly, after waiting for her to continue.

"How long have you been married?" recommenced Lady Saville, "nearly a year. Well, you cannot expect a man to be a lover after twelve months of matrimony, can you?"

"But I do not expect it, Gertrude. Do I complain or show dissatisfaction?"

"No, certainly; you are far wiser and more self-controlled than *I* was. You may not believe it, but I was desperately in love with Sir Frederic. He was very handsome—at least I thought so—and there was something very taking about him. It lasted a good, good, long time, too—at least with me. He—well it is quite different with men; so it was some time before I found out that I was relegated to the lumber room of bores. When I did I thought the world had come to an end, and degraded myself with tears and prayers, and all kinds of useless folly"—she laughed. "Fancy thinking that one could ever touch the heart of a man who is tired of you. Why, his heart has ceased to

exist for you. Then I came back to an inferior sort of an existence, and scraped along pretty well. Now, dear, Randal is a much better man than Sir Frederic, and I think he had—I mean he has a better kind of love for you than my husband had for me; besides, you're a stronger sort of a woman, so he will be longer fond of you; but do not expect him to continue a lover. It is not in human nature; cultivate wholesome indifference yourself; believe me, a man never loves a woman who is devoted to him as he does one of whom he is not sure. Randal is not unjust; you will always have what is due to your station as his wife, and I prophesy that you will be socially successful. Then Randal has an infinite horror of scandal. If he is ever *un peu volage*, it will be in the most decorous fashion, and you will never know anything about it."

Lady Saville had paused more than once in this long speech as if to give Janet an opening, but she did not take advantage of it. At the last sentence, however, she shrank as if from a blow.

"Why, Gertrude!" she exclaimed, trying hard to speak lightly, "what has happened that you should be taken so frightfully prophetic? I do not intend to anticipate improbable troubles. I don't wish to impose loverlike observances on poor Randal—who so hates to be bored—all the days of his life. I suppose the transition period is sure to be more or less unpleasant, but I daresay the loving friendship which succeeds the fancifulness of love is much better; only at first it is rather a come down. I am sure you are sincerely anxious to help me, but I must take the

rough and the smooth as other people must. I do not doubt Randal's sincere affection for a moment."

"You are very brave, I believe, and will manage better than I did," said Lady Saville thoughtfully. "The chief point is not to let your husband see that you cannot exist without him, or you go down twenty per cent. at once."

"I am afraid that Randal has already a shrewd guess at the true state of affairs," returned Janet, smiling.

"Accept another morsel of advice," continued Lady Saville, as if she had not heard her sister-in-law's words. "If your husband is not sympathetic don't believe that any other man will be a bit better. They are alike—only a lover's tenderness will last a little longer than a husband's, because there are a few difficulties in the way, and he holds a freer hand. But they're all alike, and a woman in this case stakes more than the man."

"What an extraordinary opinion you must have of men, Gertrude," began Janet, opening her eyes.

"Oh, yes. I daresay you begin to think I must be a fearfully wicked woman, but I am not—only a very unlucky one. To your untried heart, I suppose, it seems incredible that anyone should be faithless, even in thought, to a husband. You do not know what it is to hear yourself addressed in tender, respectful accents, when you have been scorned, slighted, and alone! But I don't know what has made me so lugubrious this evening. I wanted to say a word in season, and I suspect I have said too many. I want you, dear, just to put a proper value on yourself. It is

quite essential! However, one of these days, when a son and heir appears, you will be mistress of the position, and be sure you take a fast hold of it."

Before Janet could reply, Lady Saville's maid who, with the caretaker and an assistant, formed their temporary staff, came in and announced Lord Darrell.

"Darrell!" cried Lady Saville, "this is delightful. What lucky chance brings you to town?"

Janet saw with some surprise her sister-in-law's sudden and complete change of manner and expression.

"I have just come up from Devonshire and am on my way to Woodlands. Old Fitzherbert came into the club just now and swore he had seen you and Mrs. Palliser coming out of some temple of fashion in Regent Street, so I came up here to ascertain the truth," Darrell said, when he had greeted Janet very cordially.

"Now tell me all about everything," he continued, drawing forward a chair. "No, no tea, thank you. And have you left Palliser lamenting?"

"Not lamenting, I hope," returned Janet. "I have three days' leave of absence to assist Lady Saville in her shopping."

"Do you know we are going to Pau for the winter, Darrell?"

"No. I have heard nothing of you for ages, except that Alec has passed. Well, Pau isn't half a bad place; my uncle will get some hunting. I have half a mind to come and look you up after Christmas. Now, tell me! what are you going to do to-night?"

"Nothing but yawn, grumble, and go to bed," said Lady Saville.

"That will never do! Come and dine with me at the Criterion, and have a look at Wyndham in his new piece."

"It will be quite charming," cried Lady Saville, quite restored to herself. "Would you not like to go, Janet?"

"Very much indeed."

"I must ask you to dine at 7.30," said Darrell, "or we cannot see the beginning of the piece, which is necessary, I believe. Now I shall go and see if I can find a man or two to join us. This is an unlooked-for pleasure; I will call for you at 7.15. What will Palliser say to such an escapade?"

"That there is safety in a multitude," returned Lady Saville, and she went on to make many inquiries respecting her kinsfolk and acquaintances which led to some amusing gossip. Then Darrell tore himself away to organize his impromptu dinner, and having written a few lines to Palliser, Janet and her sister-in-law proceeded to make as much of their toilet as their means would allow.

"We are scarcely fit to be seen," said Lady Saville, when they met in the study, which was the only sitting room prepared for them.

"I suppose we may be looked upon as travelers, and therefore be excused all deficiencies. *You* look to me quite *en régle*——"

"To think that half an hour ago we were talking almost tragically, and now we are going off in high glee to enjoy the frivolities of the Criterion!" cried

Lady Saville, after a brief pause, and then she laughed.

"*You* were speaking tragically, Gertrude," returned Mrs. Pallister; "I only listened."

"Well, variability of mood has been my salvation. Oh, here is Darrell."

"Ready?" said that gentleman, coming in in evening dress; "you are miracles of punctuality. Sorry to say I could only secure Monti Douglas and Major Phillips. You know Monti; Phillips was rather a chum of mine in India, and has only just come back on leave. Come, are you 'fixed up' as the Yankees say?"

"Ready, aye ready," said Janet, rising; and they were soon on their road to dinner.

There is a kind of special freedom about dinner at a restaurant—a sort of elegant Bohemianism hangs about it, and Mrs. Grundy's grasp is for the moment relaxed. Though she had been startled by Lady Saville's remarks, Janet's deeply rooted loyalty had taken up arms at once in defense of her husband, and had thus strengthened her own soul. How could Lady Saville compare that coarse, cynical, unpleasant Sir Frederic to Randal, who was so fastidiously refined? Randal might have little inequalities of temper—but who was perfect? She (Janet) had better occupy herself extracting the beams of error which obstructed her own mental vision, than fidget over the motes in her husband's optics! She could not explain why, but this visit to town—the little change of scene and occupation—seemed to have done her a wonderful amount of good. She felt more like her old light-hearted, fearless

self than she had done for many a day. The truth was, she had not to study her words or weigh the tendency of her sentences—what came into her mind she spoke unhesitatingly, and found herself surprisingly fluent.

It was a very pleasant dinner. Monti Douglas was a well-known man about town, the scantily endowed younger son of a Scotch peer; Major Phillips, a soldier right through, who had been more in India than in London, a good specimen of the kind of man produced by the upper class *bourgeoisie*. He was greatly amused by the gossip and chaff which was tossed to and fro.

"I hear you mention Langford," he said, as the waiters handed round the dessert. "We have a young fellow from Langford in Southshire, in 'ours,' who has just saved the colonel's life by a lucky shot. His name is Winyard. Maurice Winyard."

"He is the son of our vicar," returned Janet, deeply interested. "He was a playfellow of mine. I am very glad to hear about him."

"He is a quiet youngster, but he has his wits about him. The colonel is a curious old chap. He is touched with esoteric Buddhism, whatever that is, and believes, they say, in lucky stars and lucky men, and a lot more. A regular old fire-eating lion; the men would follow him into the jaws of hell. I beg your pardon."

"Pray, don't mind," returned Lady Saville sweetly. "We have whittled hell down to a mere refined Inferno nowadays."

Major Phillips stared and laughed.

"At first the colonel seemed not to notice him, but suddenly he took a turn in his favor and took young

Winyard out to hunt with him. Just before I started we had an account from the hills, where the colonel and Winyard were having sport. It seemed they had been tracing a man-eating tiger, when he turned up suddenly a good bit too near, and sprang on the colonel, but before he had him on the ground, Winyard sent a shot into the beast's ear, so Colonel Drummond got off with a few scratches. If Winyard hadn't fired instantaneously, he would as likely as not have winged Drummond. He must have plenty of nerve and be a capital shot; anyhow, it was a close shave."

"I remember hearing my father say that Maurice was a good shot, long ago," replied Janet. "I hope this adventure will prove fortunate to him."

"There is no doubt it will. It spite of his crotchets the colonel stands well with the military powers that be; and as he is an old bachelor, he has no one to come between Winyard and his interests."

"I believe Maurice does not suffer from the climate," said Janet.

"No. He had a touch of fever last year, but has been quite right ever since. He was rather silent and moody when he first joined, but he came out wonderfully last winter, thanks to the Commissioner's daughter, a deuced pretty girl, I can tell you—married General Mackilligan, of the Ordnance Department, about three months ago."

"Oh, poor Maurice!" exclaimed Janet, smiling.

"He isn't a penny the worse," returned Major Phillips. "There are plenty of nice girls everywhere now in India to keep him going."

"That is a most ambiguous phrase, my dear fellow!" cried Darrell. "Do you mean that there are enough pretty girls to keep Mrs. Palliser's interesting young friend going in flirtation?"

"Well, yes; it's the best thing for a fellow, and—"

"Ah, they are a bad lot, evidently," interrupted Darrell. "Now, if you will not take any more wine, let us go and see the most fascinating male flirt on the stage."

It had altogether been a very pleasant evening. Janet found herself smiling over some of the talk and discussions which had gone on, but especially the glimpse of Maurice Winyard's career, afforded her by his major's communications, dwelt in her mind. She was sincerely pleased to find that her old friend was making way with his associates. She had been a true prophetess—his fancy for herself had not long borne the heat of the day, yet she felt that Maurice's nature was essentially faithful. How gentle and kindly he was! Would he ever be impatient with a wife who tried hard to please him? Yes, of course he would—all men would! It is their nature! Well, she heartily wished him all possible good fortune and happiness.

Surely it was a hundred years ago since he came in and found her shelling pease in the kitchen. Was she the same Janet Rowley? Sleep stole over her while she strove to answer this question. It seemed to her that she was immediately in Mervyn Woods, with Palliser beside her; that he pressed her closely to him and said, "You know how I love you in spite of my temper."

Then something woke her, and she found Lady

Saville's maid at her bedside, holding some letters on a salver.

Her sister-in-law's absence created a great gap in the Mervyn Hall household Janet found.

Her knowledge of the world, Palliser's world, was exceedingly useful, and though her nature was slight, it was kindly and specially sympathetic.

Janet was growing more self-distrustful every day, with the result that invariably—whenever she hesitated and tried specially hard to do the right thing—the wrong one presented itself and confounded her.

The house had never been quite empty, but the guests had been chiefly gentlemen. Lord Darrell paid a fortnight's visit; Janet had always felt she had a backer in him.

He made great friends with Captain Rowley also, which was in Janet's favor. Under cover of this friendship the old man was more frequently invited to dinner, and matters went with tolerable smoothness.

Darrell protested he would not go home unless Palliser and his wife promised to come to Woodlands for a week or ten days' hunting. "You have the best preserves, Palliser," he said, "but you'll find our Yorkshire hunting first-rate. I wish you had not put your spoke in your wife's hunting tendencies. She would have been ready to come out with us by this time, if you had let her ride all the summer."

"I assure you I have no wish to interfere. Mrs. Palliser can do as she likes."

"Thank you," said Janet.

"That is all very fine, Palliser, but you have killed the wish."

"Never mind," Janet added, "I am always greatly amused to drive to the meet in my humble pony carriage, and I shall be equally gratified to see you off at Woodlands."

"You are considerably too angelic, Mrs. Palliser. Now, am I to see you on the seventh or eighth of December? I'll try and get a jolly party together. I am afraid most of the best people are engaged."

"If you have good hunting. That is the great point."

"Thank you, Lord Darrell; I shall be very pleased."

And this was true. She was beginning to be just a little afraid of a *tête-à-tête* with her husband; it gave him such ample room for fault-finding. This invitation would fill up the time pleasantly till Christmas, then Lady Saville's youngest boy was to come to Mervyn, Mary Winyard and her husband were to be at the vicarage, and Randal would give them a dinner. Then they were to have a tenants' ball, and a ball to the gentry—tremendous projects, which would have had no terrors whatever for Janet, could she have felt sure of pleasing her husband, or secure of not displeasing him; but her whole life was an uncertainty.

"Did you get wet?" asked Palliser one afternoon, about two days before they were to start for Yorkshire, as she came into the drawing room, her cheeks glowing from her race with the rain, her dark gray eyes deepened into blue, as she removed her hat and pushed her wavy braids of hair from her brow.

"No, I just escaped, but I had to run for it."

She stood by the table and poured out a cup of tea, which she brought to him. Palliser rose from his easy-chair, took it from her, and stood it on the mantelpiece.

"Janet," he said, drawing her to him, and looking down into her face with admiring eyes, "after all, you are very sweet, and a deuced deal handsomer than when I first fell in love with you. I wish——"

He paused, and then kissed her brow and lips.

"What do you wish, dear Randal?" she whispered softly, while her heart beat to suffocation; was she on the point of learning the word of the riddle? "Why do you not tell me? All I wish is to make you happy."

"There are so many little things that you don't seem to understand; you do not exactly feel with me. I am rather sensitive, and I wish you could divine my wishes."

Janet looked at him with distressed, wistful eyes,

"I fear I am dull, dear; I wish I had a spirit of divination; but as it is wanting, do tell me what my deficiencies are. I know so well when you are dissatisfied, which, alas! is very often, and I am so miserable because I don't know why. If you only knew how miserable I am you would be sorry."

The soft, loving arms went up round his neck, her sweet, fresh lips clung to his, and as she felt how passionately he returned her kisses, a flood of sunshine seemed to fill her heart with intoxicating delight. All troubles and misunderstandings must be at an end. He would open his heart to her and show her how to please and satisfy him, and she would find it to be the

omission or commission of some mere trifle which she had been too dense to perceive.

" Now do tell me what are my special stupidities."

" I don't know that it is worth while talking about it just now. I am perhaps a little impatient, and but there, don't let us waste these precious moments on disagreeable things. In less than an hour we must dress for that infernal dinner at the Beauchamps'. Come and sit down beside me, and let us talk of my plans. I had a letter from Compton this morning. (He is the Conservative whip, you know.) He says our representative, Digby, is going to retire from public life. He is quite sure of it. It will be announced after Christmas. Then we'll have a busy time of it, Janet. I shall have my manifesto ready to post directly his good-by to the constituency is in the paper. I shall see Godfrey on my way through town—I mean the agent. He is a first-rate man! I think I am tolerably popular in the county, even with the bumpkins, eh?"

" I am sure you are, Randal," said Janet, speaking her real conviction, and perceiving that this was not the time to press for any rules whereby to guide her conduct, for the greater had completely swallowed up the lesser in Palliser's mind; so she gave her whole attention to electioneering schemes until the dressing bell summoned them—somewhat earlier than usual—as they had a six-mile drive to their dinner party.

" What are you going to wear, Janet?"

" Green velvet, I think."

" No. Put on your white gown with the lace concern over your shoulders."

"Very well," said Janet, laughing. "I am not sure that Raynes will be pleased, if she has put out the velvet."

"Well, you must face her wrath for my sake."

"In such a cause I will not hesitate," said his wife as she left the room.

The dinner was more amusing than Palliser expected, and everyone observed how brilliantly well Mrs. Palliser was looking. This was as it should be, he thought. It was her bounden duty to do credit to his choice.

There was some gossip about the county member, and a report that he thought of retiring was mentioned. Of course Palliser held his tongue respecting the information he had received, but he was a little ruffled because nobody said anything about his being a fit and proper person to represent the county in Parliament.

He was amiable enough on the following morning but could talk of nothing except the coming election, and seemed to be rather pleased to have a listener in his wife.

The next day but one they were to start for Lord Darrell's place, breaking their journey in London, as it was rather long, and Palliser wanted to see his agent.

They were not to leave till after luncheon, as Palliser's appointment was not till the following morning.

Janet was looking forward to her visit with a good deal of pleasure. She liked Lord Darrell, and knew several of the guests he had invited; she hoped, too, that she should be successful in steering clear of all

rocks of offense, for she fancied she had discovered one or two trifling causes of irritation; so trifling that she could have laughed had they not affected Randal.

"I think it will be a fine day," said Palliser, when he sat down to breakfast. "It is rather a good line of country up to Woodlands, but flat when you get there. However, it will be dark by the time we arrive to-morrow. What letters have you?"

"A long one from Gertrude. She seems better pleased with Pau than she expected, but they have not had a good winter, as regards weather."

Having appeased the pangs of hunger, Palliser took up *The Times*, throwing the advertisement sheet—after the fashion of creation's lords—on the carpet, while he scanned the paper for some mention of Mr. Digby's retirement.

An exclamation from Janet attracted his attention, she was evidently reading the first column—the famous list of births, deaths, and marriages.

"O Randal! Just think—Richard Palliser has a little son. 'On the fifth instant, at St. Oswald's, Sussex, the wife of R. Palliser, Esq., of a son and heir.'"

"What!" exclaimed Palliser, in a tone that startled his wife.

"There it is," she said, offering it to him, and feeling suddenly as if something tragic had happened.

"Don't show it to me," said he, rising and throwing away his part of the paper. "No, give it to me!" He snatched rather than took it from her hand.

"Insolent scoundrel!" as he glanced at the announcement, and crushed the unoffending print in his grasp. "What does he mean by 'son and heir'? Heir

to Mervyn? Not yet, Mr. Richard Palliser, not yet!" and he began to pace the room.

Janet felt stunned and utterly at a loss what to say, so wisely kept silence, the color gradually fading from her face as she recalled Lady Saville's sentence, "When a son and heir appears, you will be mistress of the position." Was this the secret of her failure to be all she ought to be? How was it that her husband was so eager to have a son to inherit his lands—his name? It was a sort of prospective greediness she could not quite understand, and yet it was common enough; natural enough, she supposed. But how unjust to visit such a sin of omision on her head, when she would gladly have welcomed a baby, boy or girl. Not that Janet was the kind of woman who yearned for children—she was not an instinctive woman. Children would be dear to her on account of their pathetic helplessness, but far more dear when they had grown into independent individuals and friends.

"What could she say," was the question that racked both brain and heart, and she could find no answer.

Meanwhile, Palliser paced the room, utterly regardless of his wife's growing pallor, half wild with anger and envy.

"Those infernal money grubbers have all the luck," he exclaimed at length. "When I made the great mistake of my life, that shopkeeping wife of Dick Palliser's took it for granted her husband or her son would be the head of the family—she will begin to believe it again."

Still Janet could not speak; a strange struggle between a sense of guilt and a sense of injustice was

going on in her heart, and no words would come. At last she faltered, "How do you know that Mrs. Richard thought such things?" was her unfortunate observation.

"For Heaven's sake do not argue," cried Palliser roughly, "you know nothing about it, and care less," and he resumed his walk.

Janet was struck dumb, and sat still for a minute or two; then she took up the paper, folded and laid it on the table, and was gently leaving the room when her movement caught Palliser's notice.

"Where are you going?" he asked. "To hide your ill-temper because I cannot always conceal my disappointment and annoyance? You ought to have more sympathy with me."

"I have all possible sympathy with you, Randal, and I have no ill temper to hide. I was going away because you are not yourself, and you are speaking more unkindly than you know. You will be sorry afterward, so it is better not to stay here now." And she left the room.

When she reached her own, she sat down like one stunned; she felt no inclination to shed tears.

A curious sort of chill numbed her from head to foot. She felt as if she had been turned on the world in the cold.

What right had she to be where she was? She had not fulfilled the end of her existence. What business had she to pose as the mistress of Mervyn Hall—deficient as she was in her principal duty? She felt like a swindler who ought to be banished from the paradise she had entered on false pretenses. A feeling of black

despair wrapped her in the dull muffling of its dismal opaque atmosphere.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Raynes, who came quickly into the room on packing bent, and started back greatly surprised to see her lady there at that hour.

"Do not mind, Raynes; go on with your packing." She brought out the words with difficulty.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but are you feeling unwell?"

"Not quite as well as usual," returned her mistress, trying to smile. "I must go out; the air will revive me."

"Won't you sit down and rest, ma'am? It's bad to travel when one is not quite right. Shall I fetch you some sal volatile?"

"No, thank you, I am almost myself again. I will go and see if Mr. Palliser is going out."

She rose and left the room, pausing in the next one to think what she should do. Was Randal waiting to ask her forgiveness for his outbreak? He ought to follow her for that purpose, but she would not exact too much, nor would she be inexorable. But she would tell him how cruelly he had hurt her. And yet it was a bitter annoyance, this birth of a son to his cousin; she knew him—Randal—better than she used, and how unfortunate she was! She began to understand that her husband did not easily forgive failure or contradiction; still he would be sorry for having spoken as he did, and she must make him understand that although grieved, she was not in a bad temper. Thank Heaven! she had resisted tears. If only she looked

less pale! A quick walk round the garden might remedy that. She dreaded meeting Randal again, but that was silly! He would say a few apologetic words and promise not to do it again; then all would be over, only she could never forget—never!

She gathered up her forces and descended to the library. Palliser was writing, and as Janet crossed the room she saw that the evil spirit still reigned within him. His smile was exceedingly pleasant, but when it was not playing round his lips or laughing in his eyes, the master of Mervyn looked a very ugly customer indeed.

"Oh, is that you? I wish you would write a line for me to Godfrey. Say I cannot see him till twelve instead of eleven, to-morrow. I have a telegram from Compton, he wants me to be with him as early as I can to-morrow, so we cannot get off to Woodlands by the midday train. I told Coates to look out and arrange for the next. No! take my paper, yours is too small and finnikin—use the third person, you know."

And this was all. He seemed to have no consciousness of needing pardon. He held himself as if he were the offended party. She need not have feared a melting appeal for pardon, or planned her own phrases in reply—so trivial a matter as her sorely wounded heart did not cost him a second thought. She drew the paper toward her and began to write, but she could not command her attention and she had to rewrite it twice.

When at last it was accomplished she handed it to her husband, asking, "Would you like to look at it?"

He glanced at her and the torn pieces of paper "I hope to heaven, Janet, you are not going in for nerves!" he said with a frown. "You are looking like

a ghost! I thought you had the nerves and health of a milkmaid!"

"If my nerves were shaken for a moment, you have quite restored them," she said steadily. "They shall not trouble you again."

"I am glad to hear it. I should be awfully disgusted if you treated us to hysterics at Darrell's place."

His tone roused the stout spirit that underlay Janet's loving nature, and she pulled herself together without much trouble.

"Very well!" she said. "And I shall be greatly disgusted if you break your leg or your arm while we are at Lord Darrell's. If you do, don't expect me to nurse you. So take care!" There was a certain lightness in her tone which startled him. Not a tinge of ill temper, but a touch of good-humored defiance. Palliser looked at her for a moment; a change, not to softness, passing over his face.

"I hope I shall not trouble you. Will you stamp these letters, please? I am going to ride into the post myself. I'll be back in time for lunch."

Then Janet hastily wrapped herself up and rushed away into the woods. Was it possible that her husband, who could be so charming, so loving, was merely heartless, sounding brass? Had she been conscious of treating him with cold indifference, would any atonement seem sufficient? Could anything ever heal this cruel wound? How thankful she would be to forget it. Perhaps, as time went on, she would grow harder, wiser, more fit for general circulation, better able to estimate things—and then would life be worth living?

CHAPTER XII.

"A WINTRY SUN."

THE journey to London was long and dreary, shut up all those hours *tête-à-tête* without hearing a kindly word. He had got over his bad temper. He was not cross. He was preoccupied and utterly oblivious of having behaved unfeelingly. Janet's pride helped her to keep up a brave show. They even spoke occasionally on indifferent topics. When dinner was over Palliser rose and lit a cigar.

"It is so desperately dull here," he said, "I think I'll look in at one of the theaters. There is something rather good going on at the Vaudeville. I daresay you will be glad to get to bed as you have a journey before you."

That day left an indelible stamp upon her heart, for she felt that it was the beginning of troubles.

Of course Randal was in a very bad temper, and later on might be sorry, but she began to doubt if he would ever say so. Even if pride, which she could not help feeling was extremely petty, kept him from saying in so many words that he regretted having hurt her, he might show by his manner, his acts, that he wished to be all right with her again. Of course she would give him plenary absolution. Yet, if he had frequent attacks of this kind, could she go on always for-

giving? Pray God that she might always love him tenderly. To lose her own love would be even worse than losing his—that would be the abomination of desolation, indeed!

But she was growing morbid. All this would blow over; she would take some opportunity, when Randal was in a happy mood, and ask him if he realized the pain he had given her. It was rather silly to have to wait till a creature, supposed to be stronger and wiser than herself, was in a rational mood, in order to put a self-evident proposition before him—"But we are all weak and foolish at times, I suppose."

With this safe generalization she fell asleep, quite worn out by the emotion of the day.

Next morning was dull and drizzling, but Janet was determined not to sit indoors and mope, so she sent for a cab and drove away with the serious Mrs. Raynes, to gather what pleasure she could from the South Kensington Museum.

But she found it a little difficult to fix her attention on the various artistic objects which she tried to explain to her companion, who observed:

"Well, ma'am, I don't know that people need go so much abroad. I'm sure I never knew there were such a heap of beautiful things in London."

The journey to Woodlands was a trifle less dreary than the previous day's. Palliser was a good deal taken up with his newspapers and some notes he had brought with him from his interview with the Conservative whip.

He seemed in fairly good humor, and spoke occasionally to his wife, rather as if to himself than con-

sciously to another. She listened with due interest, and so long as she could see solaced herself with a thrilling romance picked up at the terminus.

Lord Darrell himself awaited them on their arrival with a comfortable closed carriage.

His warm welcome was quite cheering to Janet after the awful gloom of the last two days. He was so unaffectedly pleased to see her that she could have given him a sisterly pat on the shoulder.

"It's so good of you, Mrs. Palliser, to come all this way to a disconsolate bachelor. I have persuaded my mother to come and do the honors for me; she has not had the pleasure of meeting you, but I fancy you will like her."

"I shall be delighted to make her acquaintance," returned Janet, "I have often heard how charming she is."

"Well, she has lived every hour of her life, and is still young. We have Major Phillips with us for a few days, and he is looking forward to renewing his acquaintance with you." Then he asked for news of the Savilles.

Palliser replied, and the four or five miles between the station and the house were got over quickly.

Woodlands was intensely modern, but luxurious in its appointments and richly furnished; still Janet recognized the superior stateliness of Mervyn Hall.

A whole train of servants seemed waiting to receive them, and they were at once ushered into the library, where the dowager was ready to welcome them. A tall stately woman, rather stout, but by no means shapeless. A fine intelligent face, not handsome, but

strong and pleasant, surmounted by a quantity of silvery gray hair, turned back in the style that used to be called *à l'impératrice*, over which lay a kerchief of fine lace; a voluminous trailing tea gown of rich black brocade—such was the figure that came forward to greet Janet, with high-bred ease and kindly frankness.

"You look cold and tired, my dear Mrs. Palliser; I ordered your tea to be served in your dressing room; it still wants an hour and a half to dinner, so you will have time to rest. Most of the men are out; they went to rather a distant meet, but they ought to be back soon. Very glad to see you, Mr. Palliser. It is a long time since we met, nearly six years ago, in Rome. Fortune has favored you since," with a quick smiling glance at his wife. "Darrell, I leave Mr. Palliser to you, while I take madame to her room."

"Pray do not trouble yourself," began Janet.

"It is no trouble. I am quite a young woman in some ways."

"One of the most energetic of young women," said Lord Darrell, laughing, and evidently proud of his mother. "You need not fear my mother over-fatiguing herself, Mrs. Palliser; she is ready for everything from pitch and toss to manslaughter."

"What a character from one's only boy. Come, then, Mrs. Palliser." She led the way through a long corridor deliciously warmed, and ornamented with plants and china, carved oak, busts, and statues, to a grand wide staircase, ascending which they reached an admirably fitted dressing room, where Raynes had already begun to unpack.

"Oh! tea is in your bedroom. *Tant mieux.* Your

maid can go on with her unpacking unmolested by us. Take off your out-door things, it will rest you. Draw that chair for your mistress."

Lady Darrell subsided into another chair, and proceeded to pour out tea, and hand the delicate tartines to Janet, with motherly kindness, which was peculiarly soothing to a young creature so racked as she had been, so oppressed by a sense of helplessness.

"I think you know my brother, Sir Frederic Saville," said Lady Darrell, beginning to knit a huge homely looking piece of knitting which was tucked under her arm. "I have heard my nephew Alec talk of Mervyn Hall as an earthly paradise, and of you as its presiding goddess."

"That is because Mr. Palliser and myself are fond of him. He is such a nice boy."

"Yes. He is like his mother, and she is very attractive both to men and women—which is unusual—generally those who attract the one repel the other! I heard of you in Rome, too. You knew the Beauchamps, didn't you? They are your neighbors at Mervyn."

"Yes, we see them often."

"I am glad I happened to be in England just now," continued Lady Darrell, "and could come to meet you. Generally I have flown south with the swallows before this time of the year. I hate winter in England. I like the freedom of the Continent—that is the freedom English people have there, for the natives are fettered from the cradle to the grave. Now, I shall leave you to rest. You will hear the dressing bell in good time; we are a very small party this evening, but

some neighbors are coming to dinner who are rather interesting," and Lady Darrell sailed away.

Janet was thankful for the complete change, and was immensely attracted by her host's mother. She wished she dared take counsel with such a woman; her experience would make her advice worth having, but even to a mother she ought not to speak too confidentially of a husband's little infirmities of temper.

Dinner passed over pleasantly, and Janet enjoyed a long talk with Major Phillips about India and Maurice Winyard. The neighbors proved to be very musical, and Janet was of some use in playing one or two accompaniments to the duets of the two sisters who, with their father, were the guests from the neighborhood.

This visit was of infinite use to Janet, who was rarely alone, and who felt anxious to do credit to herself and her husband. This desire fulfilled itself.

She was especially fortunate in being very much with Lady Darrell, who was evidently greatly taken with her young guest. The other women, a gay widow and a very fast young married woman, walked with the guns, and even brought down their birds occasionally; followed the hounds, and looked with indulgent contempt on Janet as a poor submissive creature whose groveling nature disposed her to bear uncomplainingly a husband's tyranny.

"You are a wonderful young woman, my dear Mrs. Palliser," said Lady Darrell one morning, when her son had come in to speak of the day's plans before starting for the meet; "you do not hunt, or shoot, or

smoke, or—yes, you play billiards very well, I believe—so you are obliged to put up with an old woman's company. I fear——"

"No, dear Lady Darrell, you cannot fear that I am dull," interrupted Janet. "I am most happy and amused with you. The days seem short, and are only running away too swiftly. I have always been accustomed to be quiet. Our walks and drives are delightful."

"You are a charming flatterer," said the old lady, laughing.

"But I have learned a secret," said Darrell, who was buttoning his glove, with his hunting crop under his arm. "Mrs. Palliser has the greatest wish to ride, and her ferocious spouse, for some reason or other, will not let her. Look here, Mrs. Palliser, I have an ideal lady's horse, and to-morrow they are all going to the meet at Miller's Corpse. I'll stay at home, and you and I will have a quiet canter round the roads, if it's a fine day, as it promises to be, for the weather seems settled."

"Many thanks, Lord Darrell, though perhaps I ought to scold you for tempting me. However, I cannot yield, for I have not brought my habit."

"Too bad of you, Mrs. Palliser. I can only repeat my warning—you'll ruin your husband. Couldn't you send for your habit?"

"No, it is of no use," said Janet, shaking her head. "I will not ride unless Randal comes with me."

"Did you ever hear anything like it?" said Lord Darrell to his mother. "Well, I shall be late, so good-by for the present. I am awfully vexed with you, Mrs. Palliser."

"Do you think me very silly?" asked Janet, who longed to open her heart to her kind hostess.

"No, my dear Mrs. Palliser. No one can judge fairly without full knowledge, and that I do not possess. You may be acting with sound judgment. I am a strong advocate for upholding one's rights, yet it is often true wisdom to give in gracefully. You ought to know your husband better than anyone else, and must feel what would please or annoy him. I don't think anyone can advise a wife."

"No, I suppose not," said Janet thoughtfully; "besides, it would give me no pleasure to ride when I know it would displease my husband."

"The best of men have fits of unreason," said Lady Darrell philosophically, "but warm love is the best solvent of all difficulties. Where that exists, everything will come right."

Janet was silent; a pang shot through her heart, for she no longer felt that heavenly security which made life too blissful. Some association of ideas with the first fair summer days of her homecoming prompted the question:

"You have been at Mervyn, I think, Lady Darrell?"

"Yes, a long time ago; when my brother was engaged to Gertrude. Mr. Palliser's mother was alive then, you know; your husband had a long minority. It is a sweet place, perhaps a little buried in woods, but the house is lovely."

"It is. I remember what a grand place I thought it when I was a little girl, and I used to ramble about the woods with my father. I fancied Mr. Palliser must be a sort of prince. He was hardly ever at Mervyn

Hall then. It was very extraordinary that I should be his wife after all."

"Not so very extraordinary," said Lady Darrell, smiling; "we were all very pleased to hear that Mr. Palliser had made a nice happy marriage. I believe I am rather a worldly woman, but I have a little faith left in love; only those capable of feeling it are few and far between."

Janet was always pleased to listen when Lady Darrell spoke. She had seen much, with shrewd, observant eyes, and her generalizations were keen and broad. Considered worldly among the worldly, she had, hidden deep down in her heart, a golden vein of pity and tenderness, which she rarely displayed, yet often acted upon. It was remembered by her contemporaries that her early married life was anything but serene, but out of that furnace of trial she came out considerably stronger than she went in. Though always holding her place in society with dignity, she was a curiously strict economist, and it was rumored had scraped together a large amount of property. She loved dabbling in the money market, and was supposed to be lucky in her speculations, but she never communicated her affairs to anyone. Once when her son, of whom she was extremely fond, had dipped himself by his extravagance, she came to his assistance with an amount which surprised him. But she was very particular as to the securing of the sum advanced on mortgage, and the regular payment of interest.

Janet was surprised to find how much Lady Darrell read. All kinds of books—tough and dry—poetry, history, even light society novels—she seemed to have

skimmed the cream of all, besides being fairly familiar with French and Italian literature.

"How do you find time for it all?" asked Janet.

"One always finds time for what one likes," she returned. "By and by, when Mr. Palliser goes into political life—as I hope he will—you will have much more time to yourself, and then I fancy you will be a voracious reader. It is almost the only inexhaustible pleasure. But when you go regularly to town, and gather a social circle round you, you will be carried away from books for a while, but I fancy you will return to it. The taste for reading is in you."

"I am very fond of people, too," said Janet. "They interest me immensely."

"So much the better! Don't show too much difference from your neighbors—people resent eccentricity."

"There is a very good library at the Hall. I do hope, dear Lady Darrell, you will come and stay with us."

"I shall be very pleased, when I return to England. But I intend to be at Pau for Christmas. I have promised my brother and Lady Saville. I am generally abroad at this season of the year. I am fond of continental life for some months. Now, I have letters to write—and you?"

"So have I. I like to send my dear father long letters—they amuse him."

"No doubt. The absent are apt to fancy themselves forgotten."

Janet never knew if Palliser was aware of her refusal to ride. As he seemed more cordial and talkative on

the rare occasions when they were alone together, she hoped he was; but she had now begun to think before she spoke to him, to turn subjects over before she ventured to broach them, and the result was that she felt mentally in irons.

She longed unspeakably to tear away the veil which seemed to hide them from each other. But how was she to do it? If she could find a favorable moment and gently reproach him for his coldness ever since he had heard of his cousin's son and heir, he might be touched and assure her of his love. She must not be a coward; there was no cause whatever why she should not speak to her husband on that or any other subject.

Their visit to Woodlands was rapidly drawing to an end. It had been very successful Palliser was occupied and amused, and Janet was a general favorite.

The evening but two before they were to leave a certain Lord Alan Seymour, an exceedingly critical personage of the highest fashion, whose dictum on beauty and art, the drama and literature, was considered, among a certain set, final, arrived for a day or two on his way to some ducal mansion in Scotland. He was immensely attracted by Janet, who was quite unmoved by his admiration and equally ignorant of his high reputation, and talked to him as easily and naturally as if he were one of the Saville boys. Lord Alan was refreshed and amused, and confided to Lord Darrell that he had not met so charming a woman for many a day. Janet's spirits rose, feeling that she had made a little success. It would be a sort of backing up for her intended attempt at explanation and recur-

rence to the old confidential tone which had existed between them. She was bright and frank and noticed that Palliser gave heed to what she said from time to time with an air of tranquillity, if not of satisfaction.

When she reached her dressing room she told her maid she would ring when she wanted her, and taking a book sat down by the fire to wait for her husband. He did not come for a considerable time, but when she heard his step she went to meet him.

He looked a little surprised. "Up still?"

"Yes. I want to talk to you, Randal."

"Have you any terrible confession to make," he asked, smiling. "Has Seymour been making love to you? He seemed rather smitten!"

"Nonsense! He wouldn't think of such a thing. I am a great goose, but I am nervous about saying what I have to say." She slipped her arm through his and pressed it to her.

"You ought to wear that pearl necklace oftener," he said, looking down at her white throat critically, "it suits you better than diamonds. Why don't you have your dresses cut like Mrs. Vereker's?"

"Randal! Would you like me to wear my dress like hers?"

"Well, not quite so low perhaps; but pray do not be a prude. Now then, what is it?"—passing his arm lightly round her.

This was promising—he was in a good mood.

"Don't you think you were a bad boy to speak to me so harshly?"

"Harshly? when?"—his brow clouding over.

"That morning—the day we left Mervyn, when you were so cross——"

Palliser drew away his arm and disengaged the other from her hold, but gently.

"If you were wise," he said coldly, "you would make no allusion to that unfortunate morning. I was a good deal moved, and naturally; but I do not think I said anything I need regret. I wonder I had so much self-control, especially as you were utterly silent and immovable—that provoked me more than anything else. Let me hear no more on the subject. Let me forget it; it is your best plan."

Janet stood stunned and speechless. She was so strangely put in the wrong—the tone of her husband's mind was so absolutely in discord with her own that the folly of attempting explanation or remonstrance flashed upon her with overwhelming conviction. It was over, all hope in that direction. But she pulled herself together for one more effort. She would not submit to a charge of indifference. She drew a little further away and said gently but firmly, "You misunderstand me, Randal! Whatever distresses you is also grief to me. You will come to know this."

"I am quite willing to believe it," he returned, with the same air of lofty superiority. "I beg the matter may be dropped."

"Certainly it shall be," replied Janet. "I will never speak of it again," and seeing that Palliser laid his hand on the bell to summon his valet, she turned and left the room.

Yes. It was finished—that passage which she thought she might have turned to good account, and

touched his heart by showing the power he possessed to wound hers. She would never offend him again, nor should she ever again be able to speak to him with frankness and trust as she used. She would do her best to be good and loving, but they never again could be as they once were; some charm had evaporated, some link had snapped.

The remainder of their visit was as successful as the beginning had been, and Lord Alan Seymour was quite openly devoted to Mrs. Palliser to the last, escorting her to the station, and expressing ardent hopes of seeing her in town in the spring. Lord Darrell promised to look them up at Mervyn after Christmas, and his mother kissed her young guest at parting with more warmth than she had shown to anyone for years.

"I shall miss Mrs. Palliser," she said to her son, happening to be alone with him, before the rest had come in to tea. "She has quite taken my fancy. If I am not greatly mistaken she has a fine nature, tender, but not weak. I wish you had such a wife, Darrell!"

"Thank you, I don't care for any particular pattern in wives! I am quite sure Mrs. Palliser would think it a great come down to descend from her husband to me."

"You are not so picturesque a figure, I grant, my dear boy. But I fancy Randal Palliser is something of a pumpkin. He is too fastidious—too finicking. He wants the breadth and frankness of true manhood."

"He is a well-bred, honorable fellow—but desperately selfish in an exalted style. I hope that sweet, fresh wife of his will not let him wipe his shoes on her!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER."

CHRISTMAS and its festivities were scarcely past, and everyone was in full cry respecting the brilliancy and agreeability of the Mervyn Hall entertainments.

Janet had on the whole enjoyed them herself. She loved music and dancing, and Palliser seemed well pleased. She was so glad to see her old friend Mary looking well and happy, to make her husband's acquaintance, and see an increasing glow of peaceful sunset light in the dear old vicarage, where the struggle of life had been hard enough. People were beginning to talk of the coming session and the various measures likely to be brought forward, when one morning, at breakfast, the usual time for important announcements, Palliser looked up from his letters with an animated expression, and exclaimed:

"Well, it is an accomplished fact at last. Old Digby has resigned! I suppose his valedictory address to his constituents will be in to-morrow's *Courant*."

"I am so glad he has retired instead of dying," cried Janet, her face lighting up in sympathy with his. "Now you must set to work at once to canvass."

"Which I should have done in any case," added Palliser, rising to ring the bell. "I must telegraph to Godfrey. He promised to send a sound, useful man

to act as my secretary, *pro tem.* You will order them to have a room prepared for him. He can write in my study. Fortunately my manifesto is ready."

"If I can help in any writing pray employ me, Randal."

"Thank you; yes. Bring in a telegram form and an envelope," he continued to the servant who obeyed the bell. "I want one of the men to take this at once to the post office."

"I should like to read your manifesto, or whatever it is," cried Janet. "Have you a copy?"

"Yes, plenty of copies. Fortunately I took time by the forelock. I don't think you will understand much about it."

Janet smiled.

"At least I can try," she said.

Palliser looked at her as if he had been scarcely aware of her before.

"For Heaven's sake, whatever fad you take up don't besmirch yourself with politics. Women become pitiable objects when they try to handle what is beyond their grasp."

"Very well," she returned, genuinely amused at his horror, "I promise never to worry you or anyone else about the forbidden topic. But I suppose I may read your speeches in the privacy of my own chamber?"

"You may read anything in the world you like. Now I will write a few letters, then I'll ride over to Newberry. I must see the editor of the *Southshire Courant* and persuade him to make room for my address too, in to-morrow's edition. That little bumptious dissenter, Canton, whose *h*'s are so inextricably

confused will have his out by to-morrow, I imagine. How the *Langford Mercury* will blackguard poor old Digby and myself."

"I might drive you over to Newberry in the pony carriage," exclaimed Janet. "I am quite eager to be up and doing something."

"Pray adopt a masterly system of inaction," said Palliser impressively. "I am most anxious to keep you out of the mire," and gathering up his papers he went away to the library.

"It will be an exciting time," thought Janet. "I wish he would let me be a little in it. It may be only an ignorant interest, but I am very deeply interested. At any rate I can read up everything. I do hope he will win. I cannot bear to think of his being disappointed or mortified, and certainly it will be worse for everyone all around if he is."

Janet, after a few moments' thought, determined not to write to anyone until she had heard from her husband what he wished, or did not wish her to say, though she was anxious to answer an interesting and amusing letter she had had from Lady Darrell, and being unable to settle either to book or work she set forth to pay a visit to her father. With him she knew she could speak with safety.

It always strengthened and revived her to be in the open air, and for the last month or six weeks her great object was to avoid loneliness and thought. She sought by all possible means to keep up her strength, her hope. She felt she was going through a dark passage, in which, if she chose, she might have found light, but a light that would perhaps have shown her

ghastly things; so she clung to the friendly gloom, holding on desperately to her own love for, and belief in Palliser—feeling that if that were wrenched from her, it would be shipwreck indeed.

It was a great excitement for Captain Rowley, and his daughter rejoiced to see how he brightened up under the stir and impetus of public interest centered round one so nearly connected with him. Janet had thought him a little dull and quiet of late, but now he was himself again, and made himself quite useful to Palliser's agent by his knowledge of the Langford people, their interests and opinions. In short, everything was merged in the contest, which was the more exciting as the Liberals and Radicals offered a strong opposition to the Conservative candidate. Things were hurried on too, that the new member might take his seat on the reassembling of Parliament. To Janet it was all intensely interesting, and though strictly obedient to her husband's command "not to meddle," she made herself mistress of every detail, and sometimes managed a little talk with the secretary, who often gave her the key of the puzzle when she was mystified.

It was a sort of revelation to her and did not elevate politics in her eyes as a pursuit; still it all interested her intensely, and quite accounted to her for being absolutely overlooked by Palliser. How could he think of anything save his speeches, and the maneuvers of his agent? He did not speak badly either. He had carefully got up all the subjects he had intended to handle, and his profound pride, his deep conviction of his superiority to the vulgar herd whom he addressed, gave him

an air of certainty and command which was very effective.

At last the struggle culminated in a very fair majority for Palliser, and the eating, and the health drinking, the speechifying, the congratulations and assurances that the country was saved once more, were all over, and for a few days Palliser and his wife took breath.

It was not for long.

"If you want to come up to town with me," he said, one day after dinner, "you had better let me know, for we must see about a house."

"Want to go up to town with you?" repeated Janet, feeling almost dazed by the question. "Why, do you wish me to stay here?"

"Pray do not invent grievances, I only want you to do what you like. Of course, you will come up after Easter, but just now, at the beginning of things, it will be dull, and I shall run down from Friday to Monday whenever I can."

Janet hesitated. She earnestly desired to do the right thing if only she knew which it was; for a moment she hesitated as to what she wished.

"Dear Randal," she exclaimed, "do tell me what *you* do wish. I am quite content to do as you like."

"No, no. I really cannot make up your mind for you. You're a responsible being, decide for yourself."

"Does he wish me stay here?" thought Janet, greatly racked by her own uncertainty. "As I must choose," was her final decision, "I shall choose what I like."

"Well, Randal," she said, "I am dying to hear you speak on the address, and of course I should prefer, in any case, being with you."

"Thank you," he said, not effusively. "Very nice of you, I am sure," and he helped himself to claret.

Janet's heart throbbed to bursting, and never did she accomplish anything more heroic than holding back the tears which almost forced themselves into her eyes; she felt she had chosen not the better part, not the part she was intended to choose, and now she could not change without making too much ado, or seeming slavish in her readiness.

What her husband evidently meant was that she should divine his wishes and utter them as her own. Now she must not draw back. Was it possible he wished to go to town *without* her? Was *she* too becoming a bore? No, she would not think of it; she would not—could not accept such a terrible interpretation of his manner, more than his words. But he was speaking again in a quiet matter-of-fact way.

"I think, then, the best thing I can do is to take the Savilles' house for the season, furnished as it is, Before our time is up I shall know if it is a desirable abode and take a lease of it, buying up the furniture, which will want to be very considerably renewed."

"Yes, that seems the best plan," said Janet, not too steadily.

"I am afraid," resumed Palliser, looking at her with the peculiarly keen look he had when not quite pleased, and which seemed to draw his eyes closer together, "I am afraid you will develop a furious taste for gayety and frivolity. I observe whenever you and

I are left together, after a spell of racket, you become tearful, with or without reason."

"Indeed, indeed you mistake me, Randal," cried Janet, yielding to the impulse of her candid nature. "I am quite happy with you, but the truth is I was silly enough to fear from your tone that you—that you began to find me a bore," and she managed a little laugh which some men might have found pathetic.

"I am not aware that I was so ill bred as to give you that impression. It is quite erroneous. I thought you were a sensible and indeed a strong-minded woman. This kind of sensitive weakness is exceedingly destructive to peace and comfort; pray regulate your fancies, for in the intimacy of everyday life it is rather a nuisance to stop and pick one's words lest they should unlock the flood-gates."

"I assure you, you need have no such dread, Randal." Her voice was quite steady now. "I am not a crying character. Yes, as you were saying, the Savilles' house would suit us very well. I shall probably write to Gertrude to-morrow; shall I mention the matter to her?"

"No, no; never transact business with a relative personally, if possible. My man of business shall write to Saville. We shall not want all the servants till after Easter, but you will settle that with Mrs. Dunsford. You seem to be rather bright about household matters."

"Only lately then," returned his wife. "At first, after our tiny cottage and one servant, this establishment seemed appalling."

They talked on, with increasing composure on

Janet's part. She was beginning to perceive that neither emotion nor tenderness nor anything suited Randal unless he took the initiative himself, and for the first time a sense of impatient weariness began to steal over her, at the prospect of always waiting for his lead, instead of following her own impulse in showing her taste, her fancies, above all her affection for him.

She said she was tired, and bade him good-night a little earlier than usual.

Palliser sat on, musing over the papers, which he now read with the closest attention, while he solaced himself with a fragrant cigarette. He was in a placid frame of mind. He gave some complacent thoughts to his wife. "Of course, I made rather a fool of her at first, and of myself, too. It will not answer to let her whimper about trifles or to think that I am to be at her feet forever; but she certainly proves that I am no mean judge of character. She is naturally well-bred, and by no means without sense; a trifle too devoted. It is an error on the right side, and I believe she is as true as steel. It is a pity the effervescence of the first days cannot last. It is heavenly to forget one's self for a little. I must teach her she is not to have a finger in any of my special pies, nor to bore me with her rugged old father. It is rather a nuisance his being so near a neighbor. Moreover, I fancy he has a shrewd eye for every change in his daughter's face, and they are a good many. Only for her sensitiveness it would not be so easy to rule her."

Then he devoted himself to a leading article he had not had time to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," in the morning—an article on the probable

composition of the Ministeral majority, over which he fell asleep, and dreamed he was "asking leave" to introduce an important bill in the House of Commons, and the members were thronging in from the lobbies, the dining and smoking rooms to listen, when the tinkle of a bell roused him. It was the butler putting the usual tray with water and glasses on the table.

. . . . .

Volumes might be filled with the minute touches which complete the portrayal of a struggle such as was now going on in Janet's heart and mind—its progress and variations, the brief footholds conquered there, the murderous repulses here—all without visible event, and under the fairest outside. Yet in that silent battle what cruel wounds were given; what hopes of healing were eagerly grasped, only to slip from the clinging hands; what strength was sapped by the sudden sultry after-glow of unexpected fits of fondness, which never really melted the rocky substratum of the nature on which they swiftly burned out. But who would have patience with these dreary details?—they must be epitomized.

The first Parliamentary season in town! Janet had looked forward to it with such joyous anticipations, and it had been a time of torture. Yet there had been lulls. Sometimes when Palliser was pleased with himself, and perceived that he was beginning to be looked upon as a promising member of his party, Janet cheered up, and hope fluttered her blue streamers before her eyes. Then they had smart little dinners, with Darrell and Compton and other political men for

guests, and the fair young hostess felt more at her ease with her husband's colleagues than with himself. She grew rapidly popular. Men did not talk of her beauty nor quote her clever sayings, but they liked to talk to her. There was a restful tone of sympathetic reality in her conversation. She did not make up her opinions nor compose her criticisms. She spoke out frankly what she thought, or honestly said she did not know enough to judge.

Lady Darrell came to town after Easter, of course, and was a tower of strength to her young friend.

Sir Frederic Saville accepted the invitation of a Russian prince, with whom he had foregathered at Pau, to join him in a visit to the Caucasus, and Lady Saville came for a series of visits to England, the first and longest of which was to her brother. Exteriorly all the joys and pleasures of life seemed accumulated round the mistress of Mervyn Hall, yet few women were more miserable than she became toward the end of the merry month of May.

She was always eager to hear Palliser's speeches, and sometimes surprised him by the remarks she made on the speeches of others. But he took care not to tell her of any happy hit she might have made.

"The season is telling upon you, Janet," said Lady Saville, one evening when she had called at the House of Commons to take up her sister-in-law. "You are looking quite ill. Why don't you go down to Mervyn to recruit? I never thought you could look so exhausted."

"It is not exactly the season. I fancy I have caught a chill. It was fearfully hot in the ladies'

gallery; then in one of the lower passages I suddenly encountered quite a cold draught of air, but I will take a hot cup of tea and that will do me good."

Mrs. Palliser seemed quite herself that evening at a large dinner party given by the Marchioness of A., where there was something of a party gathering and where she bestowed a good deal of her conversation on that scientific giant, Sir Peter Lyons.

Next morning, however, she had a severe headache and every symptom of a heavy cold. After a day of mild remedies recommended by Raynes, that excellent woman declared she would not take any further responsibility, and Lady Saville called in a doctor recommended by Lady Darrell, who was evidently uneasy about Janet.

The man of healing was a little mysterious. Mrs. Palliser had a severe cold. It was impossible to say what a cold might turn to; in another twenty-four hours he could offer a more decided opinion. For the present Mrs. Palliser must on no account leave her bed.

Next day Dr. Kaye found his patient better and hoped it would prove an ordinary bad cold, passing off in a few days, but it did not. There were many fluctuations and a good deal of fever, her strength seemed to leave her unaccountably, and as she absolutely loathed food it was difficulty to build her.

Palliser was much concerned, not to say vexed.

He had arranged two or three charming little dinners and had a long list of evening engagements, at many of which he wished his wife to be present.

In general, she showed a good deal of tact in her

management of her life, but to go and take cold at the very height of the season was rather unpardonable. He was, however, anxious about her and regular in his visits.

Still the doctor said there was nothing serious about the matter, only her strength refused to return, all she cared to do was to sleep and be quiet.

At last Palliser insisted on calling in a great fever doctor, as low fever seemed the chief malady. The great man was very kind and gentle and asked many questions, growing grave as he listened.

"She must take nourishment," he said impressively. "She is terribly low. There is nothing especially the matter, and yet she seems to have no power to rally. If Mrs. Palliser were not surrounded with all that makes life charming I should say she did not try or wish to recover. I presume Mr. Palliser could induce her to take nourishment."

"He is always entreating her to try and eat," said Lady Saville, who, with her sister-in-law Lady Darrell, was waiting for the doctor in the drawing room.

"Ah, doctor! if we could only get a peep into the laboratory of the inner consciousness, what a *bouleversement* of practice would take place. But no doubt you have methods of introducing sustenance," said Lady Darrell.

The great man interrupted her.

"Certainly, certainly; but nothing is so effective as what is willingly taken. The fever, though not high, is constant and consuming. If we could only induce sleep——"

"May I see her?" asked Lady Darrell.

"Of course."

"I'll talk to her a little, and—I suppose she does not wander?"

"No—she says very little, but her mind is perfectly clear. I have written a prescription which may, I hope, secure her a night's rest. Meantime, Lady Darrell, you might divert her thoughts for a while. Possibly some imaginary annoyance is distressing her."

As soon as the doctor was gone Lady Darrell ascended to the patient's room. Janet received her with a smile of welcome.

"So good of you to come," she said, pressing her visitor's hand with her own dry, hot one, feebly.

Lady Darrel was greatly shocked at her prostration.

"You know I am not really ill—only so very weak," Janet went on. "I shall come all right, though I do not fancy I shall ever feel young again." She spoke in a low whisper.

"My dear child," said Lady Darrell, gently but cheerfully, "you will never be right if you do not take food. Forgive me for preaching, but you do not exactly belong to yourself, for your husband's sake you ought to do your best to get well."

"Ah, yes! It would be dreadful for him if I died. As it is he must be greatly annoyed."

"And your father—think how anxious he must be."

"He does not quite know. I have not been able to write for three days—but Gertrude has. She is so kind."

"Would you like to see your father?" inquired Lady Darrell, noticing a change in her voice as she mentioned him.

"Ah, yes!" said Janet with a deep sigh. "It would comfort me to see him, only I do not want to frighten him. My father"—stopping abruptly, then repeating "my father," she burst into a fit of weeping, not loud but intense, sobbing and trembling from head to foot.

"This is dreadful," said Lady Darrell aside to Raynes. "What shall we do?"

"I believe, my lady, it will relieve her. These are the first tears she has shed, though she used to sigh as if her heart would break," and Raynes proceeded to bathe her temples with Eau de Cologne and water.

Lady Darrell watched her anxiously, and was presently rewarded by seeing her gradually grow calmer, then she smiled and put out her hand, murmuring, "My father."

"Yes, he shall come to you; and we will be most judicious in the mode of our invitation."

Soon after this outburst the promised composing draught arrived, and when Palliser returned to dinner he was met by the joyful intelligence that his wife was sleeping quietly. He had been in truth desperately anxious for the last twenty-four hours, and furious with his sister, the maid, the first doctor, everyone, once that he was aware that his wife's condition was serious. It seemed incomprehensible that she should seem almost sinking when there was so little the matter. He was surrounded by a set of incompetent blockheads, who were quite capable of letting a young, healthy creature slip through their fingers, for want of the commonest care. Why had they not called in Sir Harley Street long before?

From the hour that she obtained the relief of tears,

the rest of sleep, Janet began to rally. The following afternoon brought Captain Rowley to his daughter's bedside.

So careful had Lady Saville been in wording her summons that the stout old sailor received a considerable shock when he first looked at Janet's wasted form, but he controlled himself successfully, and felt infinitely thankful that he had been sent for.

Palliser was more like his old self—unmistakably concerned about his wife, and cordial to his father-in-law.

Captain Rowley was quite happy. Each morning, as soon as the invalid was settled for the day, he went to her room and read *The Times* steadily to her. This performance he considered of the last importance. Then he allowed himself so much time for exercise, so much for meals, etc.

The great doctor was anxious to get his patient out of bed, and out of town; and, when once she began to mend, she rallied rapidly. In little more than a fortnight Palliser began to discuss where it would be best to go for a change of air.

"What do you think of Beachurst?" asked Palliser on one of the rare occasions when he dined *tête-à-tête* with his father-in-law.

"It would do right well. The air is more bracing than at most of the south coast places, Mrs. Bent—Janet's old friend—is settled there too, and would be company for her."

"It would amuse you, too, Captain Rowley," said Palliser, who was in a most amiable mood. "I dare say you would find a good many friends among the naval men there."

"Well, no. I have rather dropped out of it all—still I like to see the bluejackets about, and to smell the fresh salt breeze."

"Yes, of course you do. Try a glass of that port. It is very soft and mellow. All the fire is gone out of it, though there is plenty of body left."

And they settled into a serious talk.

When he came to say a few words before bidding her good-night, Janet observed that her father, though evidently thoughtful, had a very contented, restful expression, and when kissing her—before retiring himself—he said, "Make haste and get well, my dear, if only for your husband's sake. He is like a fish out of water without you."

And Janet fell into a sweet sleep, lulled by the delicious hope that her possible danger might have brought back her husband's fast fading tenderness, the loss of which had wellnigh dried up the well-springs of her life.

With the approval of Sir Harley, the following Saturday was fixed for Janet's journey to Beachurst. As it was a House of Commons holiday, Palliser was able to escort his wife, and stay with her till the next afternoon.

Captain Rowley was to remain with his daughter, and Lady Saville was to pay her a flying visit occasionally. In the meantime she felt it her duty to keep house for her brother, and represent the Palliser interest in society.

Janet was perfectly content. To have her dear dad, and almost daily visits from the Mary Winyard of old days, was bliss. Then Palliser had been so nice and

kind at parting. He had kissed her gently and tenderly, just as she liked to be kissed, saying, "I daresay you will look better than ever after this bout of illness. People often rise up new creatures from such an ordeal. I hope you'll come back for the end of the season. At all events I shall come down next Saturday, if I can, but I expect I shall have to speak on the following Monday. Of course you get the Parliamentary news here as soon as in town. Don't tire your eyes reading too much; take great care of yourself; good-by."

Janet was greatly cheered by his tone; perhaps the days to come would be better than those that were past, but she did not feel that the life had all gone out of her life when he had left. It was nice to have a quiet time with her father and Mary.

Mrs. Palliser and party were established in the pleasantly situated Anchor Hotel, which, as every visitor to Beachurst—and who has not been there?—knows, faces the wide land-locked bay and the beautiful wooded heights at the opposite side, while to the west, within an easy walk, may be descried the red sandstone fortifications of Kingsport, above which rise the irregular battlements of the fort. A stretch of green common intervenes between the hotel and the sea, and further inland a range of low grassy hills shelters the little town and its pretty villas from the northeastern blasts.

Janet had been little accustomed to the sea, but she loved it, and the weeks she spent at Beachurst were indeed a precious breathing space.

Many a pleasant hour slipped past, talking with Mrs.

Bent over past days and girlish adventures, while any letters which came from Maurice were read aloud to his old friend. Janet had heart to interest herself in these things, for hope had woke again and whispered "of bright days to come."

The weather was kind to the convalescent, and every day she went out to drive with either her friend or her father.

This latter was quite gay. He had renewed his acquaintance with sundry old shipmates, and used to enjoy his quarter-deck walks with them, up and down a wide wooden pier, where in the summer evenings a band usually played.

Janet had now advanced so much that she used to walk one day and go out driving another, and looked forward to returning to town and her usual life in a week or ten days.

"You are looking as fresh as a four-year-old!" said Captain Rowley to his daughter one bright, breezy morning, when the air from the sea brought delightful coolness in spite of the broad sunshine. "I think it would do you good to come out for a stroll with me and then take your drive in the evening."

"I am sure it would! I will put on my things at once," cried Janet, shutting up her writing-book, and a half-written letter to her husband.

"Where shall we go?" she asked, as they descended the steps of the hotel. "To the pier?"

"No! It is too far for you, my pet. Come along this way to where the common narrows and a corner of the Seacombe woods comes nearly to the beach. There is a pretty cottage there and you can sit down,"

The distance was nearly a mile, but a bench on the wide walk, which ran along a slightly raised embankment separating the common from the beach, gave Janet a rest.

It was a lovely morning, and the delicious air seemed to pour new life into her veins. Can it be only material, that glorious consciousness of vitality, that joy in the mere sense of existence which, when the frame is young and the spirit unexhausted, at times swells the heart to such a buoyancy that we feel the thinnest air can make a pathway for our heaven-upheld feet!

Where, as Captain Rowley described, the woods approached the beach, a pretty little bungalow, with a wide veranda, was perched on a knoll, looking westward across the bay; a small lawn fenced by a wooden paling, and studded with much neglected flower beds, sloped steeply down the common. The entrance was at the back, and a small byroad led from the main line where the omnibuses plied to and from a suburb which had gathered round some large barracks.

"This might be made a very pretty place," said Janet, looking at it. "I am afraid it is locked, and I should like to sit down."

"I think there is someone at the other side to let us in," said her father. "Can you get so far?"

"Yes, certainly."

The gate was open, and as they crossed the gravel sweep Janet observed that there was a good-sized vegetable garden on the left, and a small conservatory. As they approached, the door was opened from within by a respectable looking workman.

"I have put a chair in the veranda for the lady," he said.

"Thank you. Come, Janet, my dear, you'll see what a fine view there is."

She followed him with some languid curiosity, and gladly sat down. Captain Rowley half leaned, half sat on the railing of the veranda.

"Well, what do you think of the lookout?"

"It is charming; I could look at it forever."

"That is saying a good deal. Isn't it a nice drawing room?"

"Yes; quite a good-sized room."

"Well, there's a dining room to the front, not so large, and a little bookroom; and upstairs four bedrooms, large and small—what do you think of that?—and a fowl-yard, with water and a capital pump—never saw a better."

"Dearest dad, are you going to take it, that you are so delighted to show off its good points?" said Janet, laughing.

"Exactly, that's what I am going to do!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Janet, light dawning upon her. "Did Randal suggest this to you?"

"Well, yes, he did. He pointed out that if at a little distance I should really see more of you; you could not run in and out, you know, which is perhaps as well, but you can come to me for a fortnight at a time, and I could come and stay with you, and there will be lots of old fellows for me to spin yarns with and all that, and it is a nice spot to sit and count the days between your visits, my pet"—he stopped abruptly and resumed. "Your husband has behaved very hand-

somely about it, Janet. He is giving me a fancy price for poor old Navarino Cottage, and *I* see he has set his heart on the move, so it is wiser to let him have his way. It's nearly as cheap as the cottage, which I don't understand; anyhow Palliser's solicitor has settled the whole thing, and on very good terms. I am getting a lease of seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years—that will see the end of me anyhow."

"Oh! dear, dear father. I don't like it. I don't like it!" cried Janet, throwing herself into his arms; and to his dismay her tears began to roll down, though she seemed unconscious of them.

"My pet!" said her father, taking out his pocket-handkerchief to dry her eyes, "you'll do yourself harm; and Janet, listen to me. Men are strange, jealous brutes. I saw your husband was set upon my leaving Langford, so I gave in to him. It is better for both of us. He has the whip hand, but he is a man of honor, dear. He'll keep his word and let you come and see me when you like; you will like it sometimes, will you not, my child?"

"Yes, often—often," murmured Janet, kissing him.

"Remember, Palliser has behaved very handsomely—very handsomely indeed in the matter."

"He is very generous, I know; but, oh, so determined to have his own way!"

"Very likely. It's as well not to cross him. Are you rested enough to return?"

"Yes, but I feel quite dazed at the idea of your living here, so far away."

"I might live in the old place, my pet, and yet be much further off."

A week later Janet had returned to her town house, and Captain Rowley had returned to his pretty old cottage. Everyone said Mrs. Palliser was looking better and more interesting than ever. Her husband distinguished himself in a debate about some small Eastern difficulty, and the season came to a satisfactory ending, in his estimation at all events.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CRISIS.

THE fourth season since Palliser's marriage had entered on its second stage, and all the world had settled to the struggle of life, social, political, legal, literary, with renewed vigor, after the Easter holidays.

Janet had found great refreshment in hers, spent with her father in his comfortable seaside abode, and she returned to take up her part in the drama of London society, with a slight increase of interest, which she welcomed and cherished as the beginning of a fresh phase of existence.

The few years which have elapsed since last we saw her were, in point of experience and thorough awakening, equal to a hundred. She sometimes smiled to herself when she read or heard people speak of "fiery trials" or "heart-burnings," and thought icy repression and slow heart-congealing could be quite torturing enough. During these years her husband had drifted further and further from her, and she had striven desperately to hold him. First, it was unspeakably bitter to lose his tenderness, then it was almost worse to admit that love in him was represented by a curious mixture composed of taste, gratified vanity, and acquired refinement, dashed with quick evanescent passion, and that she was striving to hold what did not

exist. His relapses into caressing moods grew fewer and further apart till on one occasion, when Janet, who was not easily turned from her earnest desire to be conciliating, thinking he looked pale and worn, came close to him, resting her hand on his shoulder, and offered him a kiss, asking, "Are you very tired, Randal?" he put her aside, gently it is true—he was never rough—but the rebuff was none the less potent. It was the last kiss she ever offered him, and no doubt the growing coldness, of which she was almost unconscious, helped to estrange him.

He had ceased to veil his bitter disappointment at not having a son, especially as the St. Oswald's family had been increased by a second. This was a constant source of bitter humiliation to Janet. She felt herself an impostor—she had not fulfilled the end of her existence as Mrs. Palliser of Mervyn Hall—and this conviction seemed to take from her all sense of right and security, to paralyze her authority, to make her reluctant to lay out her husband's money, or to use her own handsome dress allowance. As her feelings grew refrigerated and common sense asserted itself, she gathered strength to understand her own position, and force enough to do what was right, whether her righteousness was appreciated or not.

To make her husband's house agreeable to his friends; to give any help she could in social and political matters; to look as well as she could: these were duties which she carefully performed. But the help she could give was but small. Palliser had a secretary, and evidently disdained assistance from her hands.

Though at first she seemed to recover quickly from the attack of fever before described, the improvement was checked afterward, and she was for some time in rather delicate health—a circumstance which Palliser seemed to resent. Indeed, she was never afterward so brilliant in expression or complexion, but her face grew more interesting, her eye more serious, her manner steadier, her conversation more thoughtful—while her popularity increased, and she was rapidly acquiring a certain degree of social importance among a rather select set, whose names are never blazoned in the columns of those curious products of modern journalism—the weekly gossip papers.

Men liked her heartily and talked confidentially to her, though they never dreamed of flirting with her; and her dinners were becoming recognized as more than ordinarily well ordered and agreeable. She was now rarely alone with Palliser, and when she was, they were perfectly polite, though she felt that he liked her less and less, and the sense of being alone in the world, save for her father, grew upon her. She was more sympathetic toward her brother than she used to be, though his wife somewhat repelled her; but she steadily insisted on inviting them to dinner twice in each season, and left a small packet of Palliser's cards upon Tom in the course of it.

To recommence, Janet was thankful to find she looked forward to the rest of the season, its tasks and duties, with more of interest than she had felt for a long time.

Palliser was to arrive the following day. He had run over to Paris with Darrell to see Sir Frederic

Saville and his sister, who had made that pleasant capital their headquarters, also to pick up some political information, as he (Palliser) was growing more occupied with parliamentary matters day by day.

Dressmakers and her visiting list, writing out a plan of dinners and entertainments to fit in with their own invitations before consulting Palliser on the subject, gave his wife abundant occupation for the first few days of her return.

"Can you give me a few minutes to read over this list of dinners and evenings, and tell me what alterations you wish?"

Palliser took the paper and pointed out a few changes. "I wish you would let me see our list of engagements," he added.

"I must have left it upstairs," said Janet, looking into a small velvet bag she carried.

"Never mind!" he replied, "I shall not go out for an hour; you will find me in my study."

Having her morning planned out Janet went at once in search of the missing list, and returned to her husband, who was already writing at his knee-hole table. She laid the paper before him, and standing beside his chair began to explain how the one list would fit in with the other.

It was very rarely that Janet entered the study, knowing she was not wanted there—indeed from the time they had occupied the house in Eaton Square Palliser's private sitting room had been more or less forbidden ground to her. They had nearly finished their discussion when the butler entered with a note. "Lady waits an answer," he said.

"Lady?" repeated Palliser with a good deal of surprise. "What lady?" and he took the note.

"Well, sir, she looks rather like a foreigner, though she speaks English."

Palliser ran his eye over the lines written within the note. They ran thus: "Will Mr. Palliser accord the writer a few moments of his valuable time? She has a private communication of some political importance to make."

The handwriting was strong and masculine, and quite strange to Palliser. "I suppose I must see her, though I daresay it is a cock and bull story," he said, throwing the note on the table before him. "Show her in," to the servant.

"I shall retreat before the political secrets, as soon as she has cleared the doorway," said Janet, smiling.

The next moment, a tall, stately woman, handsomely dressed in black—not in mourning—crossed the threshold, advanced a step or two, and paused in silence, till she heard the door close behind her, then she quietly raised and put back her veil, displaying the *beau-restes* of what had been a beautiful face, with fierce, dark eyes, and a high color which was suggestive of high art.

Janet, much struck with her appearance, began to move toward the door, when her steps were arrested by a look of horror in Palliser's face. He rose to his feet, exclaiming, as he put out one hand upturned before him:

"Isabel! my God, Isabel!"

"Yes, Isabel," she returned, with iron steadiness. "Who is *this* woman?"

Palliser pulled himself together with a great effort,

and stepping forward placed himself between the stranger and his wife.

"Go, Janet," he said hoarsely; "leave me, I will come to you presently. Leave me."

"Are you safe?" she whispered, alarmed by the woman's eyes.

"Go," was all he could say; and she went.

Janet was greatly agitated; Palliser's look of horror had stamped itself on her mind, her imagination. It was an unmistakable look of fear—and she knew he had fully the average amount of pluck possessed by English gentlemen—fear and horror mingled, as one would feel in the presence of something supernatural. She sat down in her dressing room with an odd, shuddering sensation; she shrank from staying there alone, yet she would not call anyone to stay with her, as she felt that Palliser would soon come, and there must be no witness to their meeting. She felt in some extraordinary manner that this terrible woman must be his wife; the unfortunate creature whose charred remains had been buried some five or six years ago. It was absurd to believe that such a resurrection *could* take place, yet she knew it was true that this was Palliser's first wife, and she herself could be no wife. But she did not think of herself, save in brief flashes. What torture Randal was undergoing; what an awful ordeal of exposure lay before him! All the old scandal to be raked over again with an enormous addition.

"How long she was keeping him. How *did* that woman come there?"

Janet was trembling all over; she could not keep

still; she rose and paced the room, pausing every now and then to look at the clock on the mantelpiece—quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour, and an hour and a quarter—she sat down in a corner of her sofa and hid her face in the pillow.

Would he never come?

At last the handle of the door turned, and Palliser entered. His ghastly face filled her heart with compassion; she had started up at the sound of his approach, and now went forward to him with outstretched hand.

He took and pressed it convulsively, then with a cruel, mocking smile:

"It seems, Janet," he said in a harsh voice, "that you and I are to be the hero and heroine of a penny-dreadful order of tragedy. That infernal woman—do you know who she is?"

"I think I do," said Janet, growing calm at the sight of his pale fury, "she was your wife."

"Was?" he interrupted passionately. "*Is* my wife, and has come to destroy *you*; to take from you the position to which you are entitled, to bring you and me to shame."

"No, Randal; she cannot do that," said Janet steadily. "How—oh, how is it she is alive, Randal? How can we sufficiently thank God that we have no children?"

Palliser let go her hand and threw himself on the sofa she had just quitted.

"I am the most unfortunate fellow that ever breathed." He pressed his hands on his brow. "Yes, that is the only saving point in the whole miserable

tangle, and it will enable us to turn her flank." He stopped; then, looking up at her as she stood, white but composed, before him. "It is cruelly hard upon you. Another woman would be in hysterics. How fortunate it is that you are not as sensitive as I am."

"How does she come here?" repeated Janet, not heeding this comment.

"That I do not know. She would not tell. I have been cautious. I recovered my senses as soon as the first shock of seeing the dead come back to stand before me was over, and felt that I must be cautious in dealing with this devil. Her object, of course, is to extort money; mine to discover her history since she was or seemed to be burned in that hotel. It will be strange if I do not find sufficient cause for divorce in it. Had I not seen her, had I not recognized her myself, I could never believe any testimony to her being alive. I myself went to see her charred remains. The face was dreadfully burned, but the hands, the height, the general shape of the form, which had not lost its outline, was hers. We showed a number of photographs to the manager of the hotel, and he picked out hers as the likeness of the Mrs. Palliser who had come to the hotel the afternoon previous to the fire. There is some curious story behind all this. It was strange, too, that she was without a maid. Oh, Heavens! to be dragged through the mire again!" He began to walk the room.

"It is a cruel ordeal," said Janet. "But take courage, Randal, you have been guilty of no wrongdoing, only imprudence, youthful folly which has been bitterly

punished; and it is more than probable that this terrible passage may lead to real freedom."

"It shall," said Palliser, pausing in his troubled walk. "I did not tell her I was childless. I let her believe she had a firmer grip of me than she has. I asked her how she heard of the birth of my son; she laughed and said, 'Don't you think I read the English papers, whether I am in Europe, Asia, or America? And there I saw the birth of your son and heir at St. Oswald's, where you brought me as an adored bride, where you cruelly discarded me.' You see how the mistake occurred?"

"I do—and now?"

"She dwelt with fiendish malice on the disgrace which would hang round the birth of *both* my sons. You see, though she knew I had Mervyn she never was there, and associated me more with St. Oswald's, where our break-up occurred. I did not undeceive her. I let her imagine that I meditated coming to terms with her. But we parted with the clear understanding that all communications for the future must pass through the hands of my solicitor. I am going to him now, and to-morrow I must speak on the Southshore Railway Bill. It will be difficult to track her course since she vanished, but money and perseverance can do much."

"Then, Randal, I beseech you, try to steady your nerves, and do justice to yourself. This is but a temporary trouble, bad as it is. There are long, quiet days at the other side in which you will have much honorable work to do, and for some weeks, at least, little or nothing will be known. You must brave the present

storm; and keep your hold on the confidence you are winning from the public."

"I see, Janet, you have not lived with me for nothing. I little thought once that you could ever speak in such a strain. Now I must go to Godfrey. He will think I have lost my senses at first."

"Stay, Randal," said his wife, flushing up, and then growing pale, while she hesitated an instant. "I am sorry to obtrude myself upon you at such a time, but as in truth I am no longer your wife, what ought I to do?"

"Ah, yes, to be sure. I forgot. I suppose you must not stop here; we must be very guarded, for, of course, when things are settled, as I trust and believe they will be, and we come together again, it will not do to have continued in the same house; you had better telegraph to your father and go to him at once. It is due to ourselves to behave irreproachably in the eyes of the world, and you know, Janet, you can trust me; whatever occurs, my sense of honor will keep me unalterably your husband."

"I have no doubt whatever of you, Randal. You are an honorable man." She paused, for she could not quite command her voice. Was this the end of the passionate love which had sought her so eagerly? She was to depend on his sense of honor! But this was no time to show resentment or displeasure. "I shall telegraph at once to my father, but, Randal, I should like to hear the result of your interview with Godfrey. When are you likely to return?"

"It will be a long one, I suspect, but I shall certainly

return before six. You can be ready to start, and I will see you off."

"Of course I may tell my father everything? Indeed, Randal, it would be better to make no secret at all of the terrible return from the grave."

"No. I suppose the sooner it is blazoned abroad the better; the sooner the nine days' wonder will be over. It will, I fear, be rather a long affair. Lest I should be detained I will write you a check, for you had better not lose the six train, and you must not want any——"

"No, no, Randal," she interrupted, "I am not your wife, and I will not take your money. I have no debts. I have some of my last quarter, and the whole of this one. I have quantities of clothes, and I shall want but little. Do not trouble about that."

"I shall communicate with your father on this subject. I shall telegraph if anything occurs to keep me. Good-by, dear." He kissed her brow and left her.

For a few minutes everything seemed a dull blank to Janet—an unreal dream. The first idea that rose up clear out of the chaotic mist which seemed to enfold her, was her husband's extraordinary indifference toward her. That in such a crucial moment no ghost of his former affection revived, showed that it must be dead indeed. She had evidently then no real home, no real husband to leave. She was going to take shelter with the only heart that was all her own. That was enough for the present. The future—that must shape itself.

With a curious composure that seemed to her like an outer husk quite apart from the painful confusion

which reigned within, Janet rang for her maid and gave directions for the packing of her clothes, as she was going to Captain Rowley's for a visit of some duration.

"I shall tell you more when we are there," she added very gravely.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Raynes with an unmoved countenance, and immediately set about her packing.

What a strange day it was. The endless callers were sent from the door. Mrs. Palliser was not "at home" to anyone—fortunately she had no special day. Not even Lady Darrell was admitted.

Meantime Janet was desperately busy; she was rapidly putting up all her letters, papers, memoranda, the few photographs she valued, all the gifts made her by her husband up to the end of the first year of their married life, and other trifling presents from some of his relatives. These packed, she ordered her well-filled jewel case to be placed in his dressing room.

Time went at once slowly yet quickly. She strove in vain to eat. A little after half-past five Palliser returned: there was but little time to spare.

"I will tell you as we drive along," he said, and they entered the brougham which was waiting. Raynes, with the luggage, had already gone on.

"It will be a tremendous business," said Palliser, as they drove rapidly to Waterloo station. "At first old Godfrey would not believe me. He insisted that it was a case of mistaken identity. I could hardly persuade him that I recognized her at once. However, he has already put detectives on her track. The

difficulty will be to trace her from the time she left London, where she had resided for some time, and disappeared at Southampton; we are not sure that she is staying at the address she gave. That can be ascertained at once."

"It seems so extraordinary that, after disappearing for so long a time, she should hunt you up."

"It is all a matter of £ *s. d.*," returned Palliser; "it will cost a large sum, but none of it shall go into her pocket. I will keep you informed of all that takes place; but I am more hopeful since I have seen Godfrey. I trust, my dear Janet, that you do not think I am to blame in any way. Believe me, I was as certain that woman was dead——"

"You need not assure me, Randal; I am quite convinced that you are blameless—a victim, not a sinner," said his wife kindly. "Had you not better have Mrs. Dunsford up from Mervyn to look after you and the house?"

"Perhaps so. I will think of it, and to-morrow I shall write to your father. He will probably be the right channel of communication."

A few more words brought them to the station, where they found Raynes and Palliser's valet, who had taken the tickets and secured places.

"Let me know how you get on," said Palliser, stepping into the carriage after her, "and, Janet, I think it right to say I think you have behaved remarkably well."

"Have I? There is no time to say more. Good-by, Randal—good-by." There was a quiver in her voice which touched him.

"I trust all will come right sooner than we expect. Good-by, dear."

He kissed her kindly and descended to the platform, handing Raynes in with his accustomed good breeding. The whistle sounded, he raised his hat, and in another minute they had left the station behind.

. . . . . .

It was a clear, balmy, transparent night when Janet and her faithful attendant reached the busy railway station of Kingsport, where they found Captain Rowley awaiting them.

The moment Janet looked at the kind, rugged old face, she saw that her father was racked with anxiety.

"Dearest dad," she whispered, as she walked down the platform, holding his arm close to her side, "I am quite well, and though I have a curious, a wonderful story to tell you it is nothing to be uneasy about."

"Your husband?" said the captain, in a tone full of apprehension, "where is he?"

"At present he is probably driving down to the House. He came with me to the station, and will write to you to-morrow."

"Then you parted friends?"

"Excellent friends. Rest assured of that. And now, dear father, I shall not say another word on any serious subject till the broad daylight."

Janet's tone set the old man's heart at rest, and this being the case his spirits rose to concert pitch at having his daughter with him so soon again.

Janet was greatly exhausted after the various violent emotions of the day, and as soon as she had tried to eat a little supper and talked a little of the last parlia-

mentary gossip, she begged leave to retire to her room.

Weary though she was she lay long awake. It was a warm night and she left her window open. The soft silence was inexpressibly sweet after the ceaseless roar of London, and the murmuring ripple of the waves seemed to woo her lovingly to rest. She reviewed her position over and over again. It was a cruel one. For more than three years she had lived as the wife of a man whose real wife was living, and now she had no shadow of claim upon him, nor he on her. In a few days all London would be telling various versions of the Palliser romance; the society papers would hint at the probability of extraordinary scandals cropping up in the course of the impending trial; the wits and "diners-out" would make *bon mots* upon the strange affair; and "the latest particulars" would be perpetually appearing in the *Southshire Courant* and the *Langford Mercury*. It was a distressing situation for a woman not yet twenty-five. She had even been presented to her sovereign under false pretenses. She ought to be bowed down with shame and humiliation. Yet somehow she did not feel like it. She was still Janet Rowley, and disgrace did not touch her. She had come back to her dear father, and the sorrow and mortification, the degradation, the failure, the collapse of her married life seemed to have fallen from her. Why should she be afraid of social chatter? She had married Randal Palliser before God and man. She had lived openly and approved by all, and even if the results of the present extraordinary revolution prevented her return to him, there was nothing in her life

for which she need blush, nothing to cut her off from the companionship of the respectable; only *if* matters so turned out that she could not return to her place beside her husband her lot would be to dwell in the shadow of a great misfortune always—and none could foretell what the eventualities of the law would be.

How was Randal to find evidence against this dreadful woman?

Poor Randal she was genuinely sorry for. He was indeed the sport of Fate. Proud and sensitive as he was, a more cruel blow could not have been dealt him.

Then, naturally, the indifference he had shown for herself recurred to her. How steadily it had grown. With what agony she had striven against it, and refused to believe it—now, she had no doubt, nor had she had for a considerable time past. At present she had in a degree become accustomed to the loss of his love and was growing used to the fading away of her own; she would almost rather have the racking pain of watching, hoping, despairing back again, than the coldness which stilled her soul now. Oh, for the glorious days of light and warmth and color, when his footstep, the sound of his voice—a sudden encounter in the grounds —could quicken her heart-beats and send a delicious thrill through her veins. What a revelation it was to talk to him—for Palliser in certain directions was a capable and cultivated man. It was in their more serious conversations that she first perceived a change. He began to find it a trouble to be in earnest with her. Well, it was all gone—all passed by. No one would ever love her as Palliser had done for a short time, nor could she believe that any other man would love more

constantly. That page of life was therefore irrevocably turned over for her. Her husband had finished with love. As far as she was concerned, even the dry bones of the passion had been resolved into their elements; there was nothing to call back to life. Still she was very, very sorry for him, and hoped he might suffer as little as possible. For herself the sky looked very gray, but a wide horizon lay before her. Life is inexhaustible. Her brain grew weary, and the murmuring wavelets outside whispered softly of rest and freedom, till to their caressing music she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE RACK.

It was no light task to tell Captain Rowley her extraordinary tale, but Janet did it fully and vividly.

The old man was greatly upset. At his age difficulties first present themselves. He at once perceived that however strong the probability that Palliser's first wife had absconded with some old or new lover, probability without proof was worth nothing, and Palliser's lawyers were absolutely without the slightest clew to her movements or her history. It was very doubtful that her desertion alone would break the marriage, and at all events it was not much more than a year after her supposed death that Palliser had married Janet; so, however matters turned out, that marriage was void. As this woman was bound to give some account of herself, the first steps would be to test the truth of her statements. It would be a long and a costly process.

"Nevertheless, Janet, my dear child, you must keep up your heart. Things will come right, and the separation will show Palliser the value of the wife he has been obliged to give up for a bit."

The words struck Janet. Then her father had perceived more than she thought. How wise and kind his silence had been!

"There's one thing that used to grieve me, for which

I now offer heartfelt thanks to the good God; you have no children to be displaced from their birthright," he remarked after a pause.

"Thank God, indeed!" said Janet, in a low tone, "and thank God I have you to come to, dearest father. Let us be as happy as we can be while we are together. I shall be your housekeeper; of course I shall see no one until this storm be overpast, except Mary—she will be a great comfort to us both. Will you, dear, see her to-day and ask her to come to me? Tell her all. I do not feel I could go through the terrible story again."

When Captain Rowley had gone Janet nerved herself to speak to Raynes, giving her an outline of the truth, and telling her she must return to town, as she (Janet) had no need for a lady's maid.

The sedate woman surprised her mistress by the amount of feeling she displayed.

"That such a trouble should come on a lady like you, ma'am!" she exclaimed. "Ah, Mr. Palliser will know what he has lost now, that he will; and I have seen ladies that did not care half a farthing for their husbands, petted and spoiled and made much of to no end, and other ways men a-trampling the sweetest wives under their feet. Of all the contrary things in this life it is marriage. It almost always turns up the wrong side."

"Do not speak so, Raynes. I hope Mr. Palliser and myself do not belong to either class you describe. I trust all will come right. In the meantime Mr. Palliser will be happy, I know, to recommend you; so will Lady Darrell, to whom I shall write."

"Thank you, ma'am, but indeed I should be happy to stay at whatever salary you choose, and glad to help in any way. I am sure the captain is a gentleman one might serve with pleasure."

"I am grateful to you, Raynes, for your kindness," said Janet, with moist eyes, "but it cannot be."

"Anyway, ma'am, I'll go to Eaton Square and pack every rag belonging to you; there's a heap left behind; and if I want more boxes I'll just tell Mr. Palliser."

"Very well, Raynes—you know he is only too ready to give me everything."

"I don't say, ma'am, but he's a generous gentleman, and if there was law or justice in the land they would hang that adventuring impostor of a woman, and them as has aided and abetted her—*if*," she added darkly, "such there be."

"Then, Raynes, you must accept——"

"*Certainly* not, ma'am," with strong emphasis. "I am Mr. Palliser's employee, and I look to him for my wages."

"Yes, I know, Raynes," said Janet, smiling faintly. "I don't want to take poor Mr. Palliser's debts on myself. I wish to offer you this brooch as a friendly gift," handing her one of solid worked gold.

"I am sure, ma'am, your goodness is and always has been great to me." Raynes' voice broke. "I hope and trust soon to see you at the head of Mervyn Hall—your rightful place—in spite of the schemes and wickedness of those that are trying to put you out; and please remember, ma'am, I'll leave any place to come back to you."

The warm sympathy of Mrs. Bent can be understood. To her, who always pictured Palliser as the most lover-like of husbands, this reappearance of his first wife seemed a trial too hard to be borne. Her amazement at Janet's fortitude and composure was immense.

"I did not dream you were so strong, dear!" she exclaimed, after a little conversation with her early playfellow. "I don't know how you can bear yourself."

"My father used to say, 'Needs must when the devil drives,' which is a rough paraphrase of the impossibility of resisting the inevitable," said Janet quietly.

"Poor Mr. Palliser! I am awfully sorry for him too," continued Mrs. Bent. "But life will be all the more delightful when every barrier between you is cleared away!"

"Yes; it will be a trying time," and Mrs. Bent fancied the sentence ended with a deep sigh, though she did not understand her friend's dry eyes.

This was the first of many visits. Indeed, the intercourse between Janet and her old friend was close and constant. Mary was now the head of a family party, as a sturdy boy of two and a tiny girl of five months entitled her to a nursery, and it was a real pleasure to Janet to work for them and play with them.

In due course Palliser's letter reached his father-in-law, and was all it ought to be. Captain Rowley at once handed it to his daughter.

From it they gathered that after an interview with Palliser's solicitors, wherein she learned that her position was considerably weakened by the non-existence of a son and heir, Mrs. Palliser, as she called herself,

had disappeared from the lodging where she had given her address—a very obscure one—with the evident intention of giving as much trouble as possible. But Palliser's agents had already placed her under surveillance and they had no doubt she would soon be discovered. Their first effort would be to find her former maid—a very respectable young woman who had left her service only a day or two before her mistress undertook the journey on which she was believed to have lost her life. This maid had since married, and no one knew her present name.

Palliser then proceeded to speak of business.

He proposed an arrangement by which—pending the legal proceedings about to be commenced—a certain income or allowance should be paid from the Mervyn estate to Janet.

"A very proper feeling on Palliser's part," said Captain Rowley; they were perusing the letter together.

"It is a provision I can never accept," said Janet in a low, firm voice.

"My dear, I should not say a word on the subject if I could give you a home such as you have left."

"Dearest father, do you think I have fallen so far below my original self that fewer servants, less elaborately served dinners, the necessity of doing a little more for myself, could make the smallest difference, if—if you do not mind taking the burden of my maintenance on yourself? I shall make but a small addition for the next year at all events and——"

"Nonsense, my pet! I am but too happy to have you."

"Thank you, oh, thank you"—catching his hand and pressing it tightly between her own. "I have to be grateful to you for everything all my life, but especially for saving me from the humiliation of taking his money."

Her lips quivered, and her voice broke.

"I do not like to hear you speak like this, Janet," said her father, very gravely.

"Then you shall *not* hear it again," she returned, recovering herself. "Believe me, I will never fail in my duty to my husband!"

"I do believe it, but do not fail in love either—love works wonders."

"I trust you will approve of all I do. But you will write to Randal and say we will not have his money?"

"Very well, but——"

"Oh, I do not want you to write unkindly, dear. I should like to write myself if I may, and I will show you the letter. I feel a little puzzled what I may or may not do, under my very peculiar circumstances."

"The chief thing, I fancy, is not to meet more than you can help—just to keep Mrs. Grundy quiet, you know. But as to writing, write by all means; it will be a comfort to him—poor fellow!"

"Perhaps so," said Janet, with a fixed, far-away look in her eyes, a sad soft expression stealing over her face. "Perhaps so. Another difficulty, dear father, has tormented me lately—what am I to call myself? I have no right to the name of Palliser, and anything else seems dreadful, such a badge of—disgrace! It may appear to you but a small matter, yet I am greatly troubled about it."

"No, I don't think it such a trifle; you must revert to my name, but you need not hear it very often." Silence fell upon them for a moment or two. Then Captain Rowley rose and said, "I shall write to Palliser at once," and retired to his own little den.

Letter-writing was a somewhat slow process to the old sailor, and before he had completed his task, Janet came and laid her brief epistle beside him.

"I have just read your letter to my father, dear Randal, and thank you for the kind thought of my necessities you are always ready to give. Do not think me ungracious in refusing your offer, but during this period of separation and uncertainty I cannot accept money from you. I am sure you will understand my feeling on the subject.

"As, for some considerable time, I shall live in the strictest seclusion, I shall want very little and put my father to very small expense. Let this question drop then. You will keep me or my father informed of all that goes on, and try to look forward with hope, for this can be but an episode in your life, though a most painful one. With warmest sympathy in your present trouble, I am always yours sorrowfully, JANET."

She felt she had no other name to add.

Captain Rowley read it through and then reperused it, without making any remark.

"Don't you like it, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, it's all very nice; but it's not a very wifely letter."

"And I am no wife."

"That's true. I don't exactly understand how the land lies, but don't you be too independent; think of the future."

"I am always thinking of the future," said Janet, with a heavy sigh, "and it is even worse than looking back."

Captain Rowley gazed at her with a pained, puzzled expression, and then took up the letter without another word. Janet bent down and kissed his brow; then she left the room.

. . . . . .

It is marvelous how soon the stream of life makes to itself new channels when falling rocks or shifting sands choke up the old ones, and Janet soon settled into the routine of her retired existence, unvaried as it was by any exterior event except Palliser's letters.

By this time a hundred and one rumors had been put in circulation, and curiosity was on tip-toe respecting Captain Rowley's daughter, so that Janet could not bear to walk in any frequented part, so conscious was she of covert looks and backward glances.

There were some woodland walks beyond the bungalow where, with her father, Janet could take some exercise—also in the soft summer evenings they could stroll along the beach beyond the embankment, where only an occasional couple of lovers crossed their path.

It gave her a curious unpleasant sense of imprisonment and espionage—this shunning of her fellow creatures, yet the days were not altogether dreary.

She was at home, really and truly at home, the

supreme head of all things. She enjoyed regulating, and even dusting with her own hands. Then she had ample time for reading and music, and never before had she so much letter writing—every creature who had the least right to address her sent sympathizing letters, especially Lady Saville, who promised to pay her a visit as soon as she came to England.

Early in this time of seclusion she was startled by a most unexpected visitor.

It was a very sunny afternoon, and Janet was writing in the drawing room, which was kept cool and dark by the outside blinds of the veranda, which yet admitted the fresh breath of the sea, when the very respectable woman who, with a little girl, did the captain's household service, entered with a card.

"Will you see the lady?"

Janet, with surprise and pleasure, read, "Lady Darrell." She immediately went into the hall to receive her, and found her sitting in one of the Anchor Hotel flys, waiting for admittance.

"This is kind and good of you," cried Janet. "Do come in. I believe you have come here on purpose to see me!"

"I have indeed, my dear," resting her hand on her arm as she alighted, and then, on reaching the hall, pausing to kiss her gravely. "You are looking on the whole better than I expected, though you are thin and worn, and not the Mrs. Palliser I saw last season."

"Come in, dear Lady Darrell. I am so glad—oh, so glad to see you!" Her voice showed how close the tears were to her eyes.

"You have a charming room here," said Lady

Darrell, as she entered the drawing room, which was sweet with flowers and musical with the gentle dash of the waves beyond.

"Come out on the veranda; there is a nice comfortable chair, and you can see across the bay to the end,"

"Well, my dear child," said Lady Darrell, when she had settled herself, and Janet had drawn a low basket chair beside her, "what an awful business this has been!"

"It has indeed," said Janet emphatically, in a low tone.

"It will make you all the rage, my dear, next season, when everything has been put right. How are matters going on? That dreadful woman has disappeared, I believe?"

"I think they can put their hands on her when necessary. The difficulty is to prove what she has been about since the hotel was burned. But I have not heard anything for some days. Lord Darrell was kind enough to write to me——"

"Yes, he wanted to come here with me, but I told him it would not do."

"Quite right, dear Lady Darrell. I do not wish to see anyone except yourself and Lady Saville. Now, you must stay to dinner. My father will be so pleased, and we have so much to say."

"Thank you, my dear. I shall be charmed to dine with Captain Rowley and yourself. I am really *en route* for Brittany, and shall go on to-morrow to Weymouth. My eldest daughter and her little flock are at D., where I am to join her"—and her ladyship plunged into a disquisition on the state of affairs.

"Nothing has made such a sensation for ages," she exclaimed. "You know people have hardly forgotten about the Palliser separation case, when the Palliser divorce will rivet their attention. Your husband—oh! yes, everyone looks on him as your husband—he is looking awfully ill; everyone feels for him, and for you—to be parted in this way—just when you might be a comfort to each other, for you were considered a pattern couple." Janet smiled sadly. "You have a charming lookout here, and such a pretty miniature house. But it must be very quiet."

"Of course it is, Lady Darrell."

"Suppose you come over to me for a month or six weeks? It would be a complete change and do you good, besides giving me pleasure."

"Many thanks. You have always been most kind to me, but I should be a sorry sort of guest. No, dear Lady Darrell, I shall not quit my father's roof while this dreadful business is hanging over me. This is my proper place, and I do not think my poor father would be happy if I were out of his sight."

"Very likely. I shall leave you my address across the water, however, and if you should fancy a little change, do not hesitate to tell me so and come over to us."

"I am really grateful to you," said Janet softly, "but I must stay where I am. I must leave you for a moment to see if my father is in the house."

Lady Darrell looked keenly round while she was away. That is, at the photographs and ornaments, a few water color seascapes, and a large photograph of Janet in her Court dress.

"Hum," said her ladyship to herself, pausing before a small portrait in oils of a naval officer. "The father, I suppose. Fine bluff sailorlike fellow; would have 'shivered his timbers,' and 'mastheaded' his youngsters forty years ago, in approved Maryatt style; there's no one left now to use such cabalistic language. But I don't see Palliser anywhere! He ought to be on her writing table enwreathed in forget-me-nots. Here's the writing table—but no Palliser! She is a brave woman and is bearing up wonderfully, but it doesn't strike me she is breaking her heart about her—no not her husband! It is really extremely awkward. Ah," aloud as Janet returned, "I am examining all your pretty things, Mrs. Palliser! You have some pretty water colors here."

"They are the work of an old shipmate of my father's long ago."

"Very nice, I am sure! Who is this neat-looking young woman, who seems to be holding a foaming waterfall in her arms?"

"That is a great friend and former playfellow—she is the daughter of our vicar at Langford—Mrs. Bent; she is, as you see, a little overpowered by her baby's robes."

"The man in the surplice is her father, I presume; but who is the young man in the cricketing suit—a bright, honest looking young fellow?"

"That is Maurice Winyard—Mrs. Bent's brother. My father is out just now, Lady Darrell, but will most probably be in to tea. He will be very pleased and grateful to you for coming."

"My dear, everyone is pleased to see you. We

shall all be giving entertainments in honor of your second nuptials next spring."

"Don't!" The word escaped Janet's lips in a low tone of earnest entreaty, before she could arrest it, but Lady Darrell did not seem to hear.

"By the way," she went on, "your maid called one morning about a fortnight ago to ask if I would speak for her to Lady Arabella Marchmont, who has lost the person who has lived with her for years. She seems a quiet, capable woman. Lady Arabella was going to engage her, but she wrote to say that she was obliged to decline as she was called away by business, so Lady Arabella found another. I was rather vexed, as——"

Here further speech was prevented by the entrance of Captain Rowley, who was greatly surprised to find such a fashionable looking dowager *tête-à-tête* with his daughter. The old man looked as well as spoke a hearty welcome.

. . . . . .

In the meantime, Palliser's lawyers had given notice of a suit for divorce on the part of their client, secure of having time to hunt up evidence, as the number of cases already on the list forbade any chance of a hearing till after the Long Vacation.

Mme. Holderberg, as she called herself, reverting to the name she bore when Palliser first knew her, had, with some difficulty, been traced to a very small apartment in one of the side streets in the upper town of Boulogne, where she lived apparently quite alone, and in the strictest privacy. It was thought prudent not to disturb her at present, but to keep her in sight.

While this search was going on repeated advertisements for Caroline Donne, who had been Mme. Holderberg's maid up to the time of her disappearance, had brought forth no information, and Mr. Godfrey, the head of the firm which managed Palliser's affairs, was beginning to feel somewhat uneasy. He was at the further side of middle age, but still very keen and active, and had been Palliser's confidential adviser since he had come to man's estate. He it was, who from time to time visited his client's first wife, and kept a strict watch upon her, as she well knew. He was acquainted with her maid's appearance, and kept her in view also; finding, however, as time went on, that she was a steady, respectable young woman, and concluded that her employer probably kept her as long as she did as a sort of guarantee for her own good conduct.

She had given Mme. Holderberg notice to leave some considerable time before she went—in order to marry a man to whom she had been engaged for some time, who had been a butler but had retired to set up a lodging-house at the seaside.

She had been examined at the inquest held on the remains of her unfortunate mistress, whose service she had only quitted a few days previously, but had very little to say. Her mistress, to whom she seemed attached, had arranged to go abroad to meet an American lady, whose name was known to Godfrey as one of her few friends. Caroline had packed her boxes for a trip of two or three months in the South of France, and understood that a French maid was to join her at Southampton. This person had been, she said, recommended at a bureau for servants, but hav-

ing a sister at Southampton, she asked leave to spend a couple of days with her, previous to entering on her new service. Having taken leave of her the evening before she was to start, and prepared all things for her journey, Caroline never saw her again in life.

After the inquest she disappeared from Godfrey's sight, and he never knew or had forgotten her married name.

"They have published a description of Miss Caroline Donne's personal appearance," said Cooke, Palliser's valet, as the upper servants were taking tea in the housekeeper's room one afternoon when Mrs. Raynes had dropped in to enjoy a gossip with her former housemates.

"Dear me!" said the cook. "I shouldn't like my description to be in the paper; it is all one as being wanted by the police, in a manner of speaking."

"I wonder if it's in the *Times*," remarked Raynes.

"Why, of course it is," said the butler magisterially, "everything of importance is put in the *Times*."

"I wish I could see it, Mr. Cooke," continued Raynes. "I am that interested about our poor, dear lady, I think of her night and day."

"So do I," said the head housemaid. "She is a nice lady—always kind and polite—only she does not want you to say much to her. Ah! no one knows whether she was happy or not. I've my own ideas on the subject," and she shut her mouth with an aggravating snap.

"And so have I," cried the valet belligerently. "I'm sure if she wanted to eat gold Mr. Palliser would give it to her."

"Ah," said the housemaid, "gold can't nourish the heart."

"No, nor the stomach either!" exclaimed Cooke, "as we have read of gold miners in Australia dying of hunger by the roadside, with their pockets full of nuggets."

"As Mr. Palliser has seen the paper and won't be in yet for hours, I think I'll fetch the paper," observed the butler, "indeed I haven't seen it myself yet, and I'm greatly disgusted at the way Gladstone is giving in to them Irish!" and Mr. Dickson rose and rang the bell with dignity, ordering the boy who answered it to fetch the *Times* from the breakfast room.

"Read it out, do, Mr. Dickson! You read first-rate," proceeded Cooke. Whereupon the butler turned over the broad sheet till he found the celebrated second column. "Ah, here it is." He cleared his throat and read, "'Caroline Donne, who is believed to have married in 18—, married name unknown, is requested to communicate with the undersigned, as she can give some information and will be remunerated for expense and trouble. Any information which may lead to her discovery will be rewarded. Supposed to have been living at the seaside in above year; height, about five feet four; slight figure, very upright, dark brown hair, rather broad face, brunette complexion, light brown eyes—a slight cast in left one—dresses in dark color. Apply to Messrs. Godfrey & Sons, solicitors, Abingdon Place, Westminster.' There! What do you say to that?"

"It aint very nice for a young lady to be advertised as having a squint," said Miss Bradley, the housemaid.

"That don't matter, as she has made her market," observed Mr. Cooke, who was a bachelor, and slightly cynical.

"A cast in the eye," said Mrs. Raynes, as if to herself. "Would you let me have a look at the paper, if you please?" she asked, and proceeded to pore over the advertisement in silence. Indeed, she continued somewhat preoccupied while she finished her tea, not joining in the animated discussion which ensued on the aspects and merits of the Palliser case—Miss Bradley and the cook taking different sides; the former hinting at the possibility of a profound and diabolic plot, whereby the murder of his first wife, and her supposed reappearance in order to free him from the claims of his second, were darkly imputed to Palliser.

In the midst of the somewhat noisy assertions and counter-assertions, Mrs. Raynes took leave of the company, stating that she had almost made up her mind to go abroad with Lady Arabella Marchmont, but if she did not her friends should see her again next week.

The following morning, soon after eleven, a ladylike woman well dressed in black presented herself at the office of Messrs. Godfrey, and was duly noted by the boy in the watch tower, *i. e.*, the box on the stairs, where those who ascend into the spider's premises are registered in the office doomsday book.

"Mr. Godfrey?" repeated the clerk to whom the newcomer applied. "He won't be here till twelve. Won't Mr. Dobbs, the manager, do?"

"No, certainly not," she said. "I will leave this note and call again about twelve." She handed him a letter and departed.

True to her appointment she returned, and was received with some *empressement*.

"Mr. Godfrey will see you at once," said the clerk. "Come this way, please." She was ushered up another pair of stairs and into a well-furnished private office. There, an elderly gentleman, with iron gray hair and a square decided face, half rose from his chair, and motioned her to be seated; then he looked among his papers on his kneehole table and produced her note.

"Mrs. or Miss Raynes?" he asked, looking keenly at her.

"*Mrs.* Raynes, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Raynes, you tell me in this note (this *is* your note, I presume?) that having seen the advertisement for Caroline Donne in yesterday's *Times* you have come to say you think you know a person answering to this description?"

"I have, sir.

"And—ah—what do you know about this Caroline Donne?"

"I am not sure the person I knew was Caroline Donne. But the description resembles a Mrs. Reed, in whose house at Brighton I lodged for some months. Did you know this Caroline Donne, sir, by sight?"

"Yes. I have often seen her."

"Then would you recognize this?" and Mrs. Raynes drew forth from a neat little leather bag an envelope, from which she took a photograph.

"Is that anything like her, sir?" she asked, handing it to him.

Mr. Godfrey fixed his double glasses carefully on

his nose, and gazed at the portrait for a minute in silence.

"It is certainly like her," he said at length. "Where and when did you know this person?"

"I went to Brighton in the late autumn of 18— with the Honorable Miss Fortescue, sir, and we had the upper part of Mrs. Reed's house. She had not been long married, and she had been in service as a lady's maid, but she said very little about her unmarried life. She was a very superior, well-educated woman, and we became very friendly. In the spring we went abroad and one or two letters passed between Mrs. Reed and myself. Then I lost sight of her. I did hear that Mrs. Reed became bankrupt and went to America."

"If so, I am afraid she is out of reach. She would be chiefly valuable to us as being able to give indirect information. Have you any clew to the relations or connections of this Caroline Donne or Reed?"

"I know Mr. Reed came from Chester, sir. He used to say his father was sexton of the oldest church in the town."

"How long ago is it since you knew these people?"

"About six years, sir."

"Yes, that would be about the time," said Mr. Godfrey musingly. "As you know this Reed and his wife," he resumed, after a moment's thought, "it wouldn't be a bad plan if you were to go and look them up, eh? Could you undertake this bit of work, if you are not otherwise engaged?"

"I am quite free, sir, and if I were not, I would give up a good deal to do a bit of real service to the present Mrs. Palliser."

"You know Mrs. Palliser then?"

"I entered her service when she was married, and have been with her ever since."

"Ah, poor lady! It has been a bad business for her."

"It surely will not end badly, sir?"

"No, I think not, but it may be tedious. We are somewhat at sea, though, no doubt, we have shrewd employees. Well, will you look up these Reeds? Do you think you can manage such a task? People want delicate handling sometimes. They shy at the notion of being examined by a lawyer; your knowing this Caroline Donne previously will be a help, eh?"

"I think it will, sir; she is a quiet sensible woman. I think I can manage it. At any rate I shall find some trace of the people we want."

"You had better try; when could you start?"

"This afternoon if you wish."

"By all means. Of course we will pay your expenses; keep an account of your outlay till your return. Would you like anything in hand?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"Leave me your address in town, and let me hear to-morrow where you are to be found in Chester. Good-morning, Mrs. Raynes. I wish you all success."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DECREE NISI.

LADY DARRELL'S visit cheered and comforted Janet. She was naturally brave, and by no means subject to nervous fancies or depression; but of late she had been less physically strong, and times of weakness come to the strongest, unless indeed the strength is based on hardness of heart. The drop from constant and brilliant society, distinction, observance, to seclusion and careful avoidance of notice, was a big one, and it sometimes jarred upon her; while again the sense of being supreme, the chief object of love and consideration in her father's simple home, gave it a tender charm of repose and peace which she had long ceased to find in her husband's. Meantime, Palliser's letters kept her informed of the progress made in preparing for the impending divorce suit, sometimes addressed to her, sometimes to Captain Rowley. Their tone was friendly and showed that he was concerned for her comfort, but the lover had evaporated.

The future presented a very somber outlook to Janet; the more she looked at it the more formidable it seemed. Day by day it presented itself in more repellent guise till she shrank from its contemplation, taking refuge in any subject, any employment, to escape from thought.

It was a week after Lady Darrell's visit, and Janet had gone to spend the day with Mrs. Bent and her babies, as Captain Rowley had gone for a cruise with an old messmate round the bay and to a little fishing hamlet which was beyond the southern headland on the open sea.

"There is something the matter, Mary!" she exclaimed, when they had exchanged greetings. Her friend's eyes looked like tears, and there was something restless in her manner.

"There is indeed!" she returned. "Have you seen to-day's paper?"

"No. My father started early, and when I do not read it to him I rarely look at it, unless there is some notice of Mr. Palliser's speeches."

"There is a notice of poor dear Maurice in to-day's *Times;* only a telegram, though a long one. It seems there has been a totally unexpected outbreak among a hill tribe, whose name I cannot pronounce, somewhere on the eastern frontier, and a small party of English troops was surrounded in the village. The commander managed to telegraph to the nearest station, where they had not many soldiers either. There was a company or two of Maurice's regiment there, and somehow he was sent in command, though there must have been officers of higher rank there; at all events they had a terribly difficult march, and he seems to have managed wonderfully well against greatly superior numbers. He held the insurgents at bay till a larger force came up; but he is severely wounded. These telegrams are dreadful things. It will be quite three weeks before we can possibly

have any particulars. Meantime we just know the worst. Poor dear mother, she will be terribly anxious. I will get you the paper," and she hurried away.

How diligently they pored over the brief details of the telegraphic dispatch; the sister chiefly concerned about her brother's probable sufferings and loneliness —away from the loving care and companionship of his kith and kin—the friend almost excited at the splendid chance thus offered for a stride upward in his career.

"He ought to do splendidly now, Mary," she exclaimed, "after proving he possesses such soldierlike qualities. It seems to me quite incredible that Maurice, who was so easy-going, so devoted to games and sport, so young of his years (I am sure I feel ever so much older than he is), should command a number of men and be equal to such a tremendous affair. I feel quite proud of him."

"You never appreciated him, Janet," said Mrs. Bent tearfully. "Because he was perfectly straight and simple, and thought so little of himself, you overlooked him. We all knew how we could depend upon him and trust him. He always seemed to know what was best to do even when we were quite children, and you and he used to quarrel; he always took care of us, and knew his way all over the country. He was so gentle, too; no one seemed aware how strong and brave he was. He never gave a thought to himself. No, Janet, you never appreciated Maurice, and he was so fond of you."

"You have painted a hero, Mary," said Janet, with a soft far-away look in her eyes. "Perhaps I did not do him justice—I was so vain and selfish then. Oh,

how much I have learned since! Now, Mary, dear, you must not fancy your brother is going to die; you know how healthy he is, and though not at home he will have excellent care. You must determine to believe he will recover quickly until you hear further. When can we have the full account?"

"This is the third of July. Oh, not certainly for three weeks. I must write to poor dear mother, Janet."

"Yes, you must; and may I put in a few lines?"

"Oh, yes, do. She will be delighted. She was always so fond of you."

"And always so good to me. While you write, Mary, I will get the map and look out this place, Chandrapur. It must be a very mountainous district."

From this startling news the friends could not get away. It took them back to early days, to the tears and joys, the battles, the reconciliations of childhood and budding youth, till their reminiscences reached the epoch of the ever-to-be-remembered ball given by Palliser to celebrate his return to reside in his ancestral hall. Here Janet paused, and contributed no more to the stream of recollections. She kept silence while her friend continued to speak, till her stillness attracted Mrs. Bent's attention. She stopped, and looking earnestly at Janet saw that she was white and that her mouth quivered.

"My dear," she began, when Janet suddenly broke down, and bursting into tears covered her face with her hands, sobbing for some minutes as if her heart would break.

"Do not, dear," said Mrs. Bent, with some vague

idea of consoling her. "Of course, it is dreadfully trying now, but after all it is only an exercise of patience. A few months and all will be right again; you will be in your proper place by your husband's side. Just think of his joy to welcome you back, and——"

"Don't," interrupted Janet, starting up with an impatient gesture, walking toward the door and returning. "I am contemptibly weak. Talking of those sweet old days was too much for me. You know I never dare cry at home, for I feel my dear old dad watches me keenly, to see if I am fretting or not. O Mary, of all the blessings God has given us, the best, the most merciful, is that we are kept from a knowledge of the future."

"Still, dear Janet, I think that your future promises to be very bright. You must keep up your heart by looking at it."

Janet made no reply. She slightly shook her head, and, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, leaned back in her chair and seemed by her stillness to have regained self-possession.

The appearance of Mrs. Bent's little son, with a nice clean face and snowy pinafore, ready for dinner with mamma at luncheon-time, gave a pleasant turn to the current of their thoughts. Janet was glad to take him on her knee and explain to him for the twentieth time the uses and history of the many charms and appendages dangling at her watch chain.

. . . . . .

To take the reader through the complications of a divorce case is but to repeat a species of entertain-

ment with which he is but too familiar in the daily papers; so while the summer and autumn drag their slow length along we will summarize the discoveries and piece together the case laid before Sir H. F., the well known judge of the Divorce Court, early in the following Michelmas term.

Before the prorogation of Parliament, Palliser's medical adviser insisted strongly on his taking a rest and making an expedition into Spain, or some other less tourist-haunted country, in order to have complete change of air and scenery, and Palliser went very readily.

Meanwhile his active, energetic men of business hunted up the faintest scent, with the keen perseverance of bloodhounds.

Mrs. Raynes' search for her ex-landlady, Mrs. Reed, *née* Donne, was, after a few disappointments, successful, and when this rather shy bird was caught she had more to tell than was anticipated.

In the interval between her acquaintance with Mrs. Raynes at Brighton and her renewal of it at Chester, Mrs. Reed had become a widow, and had established herself as a dressmaker in her husband's native town. She was very reluctant to give any information to the lawyers, chiefly because her late husband at the time that Mrs. Palliser was believed to have lost her life in the fire, and frequently afterward, had solemnly warned her to say as little as possible as to her late mistress, and that only what she positively knew—not what she suspected—as he (the late Reed) believed there was a lot of black business behind it all, and he did not want his wife to be mixed up with it.

Then Mrs. Reed gradually admitted that for several years Mrs. Palliser had lived in great seclusion in South Kensington, visited occasionally by ladies, chiefly American and foreign, with whom she dined sometimes at hotels or private lodgings, as none of these friends and acquaintances seemed to reside in London.

Mrs. Palliser was well-tempered and open-handed, and Mrs. Reed liked her mistress, but she was not so devoted an adherent as she was believed to be. She did think Mrs. Palliser was "hard done by," as she was certainly watched by detectives, and she often complained of this.

Just before Mrs. Reed left Mrs. Palliser's service she was greatly surprised one day to recognize her mistress driving in a hansom with a gentleman—a well-dressed gentleman, who was talking and laughing, and quite at home. It was one afternoon she had been sent to the dressmaker's, and having done her mistress' errand went on one of her own, which took her to Edgware Road. This would not have impressed her so much if the same gentleman had not presented himself two days after at the house and asked if Mrs. Palliser lived there. On being answered in the affirmative he begged that his card might be taken up, with a request that he might be admitted. On the card was printed "Colonel des Voeux," and on the top in a small feminine hand was written, "introduced by Mme. Holderberg."

On receiving the card, Mrs. Palliser, who was reading in the drawing room, repeated the name aloud, as if a little puzzled, lifted her eyebrows, and said, "I

suppose I had better see him; show the gentleman up, Caroline."

Mrs. Reed had been both lady's and parlor maid.

When the gentleman entered, he made a profound bow as if he was the greatest stranger; then Mrs. Reed left the room. He did not stay long, for the drawing room bell rang soon after, but as she was coming up the kitchen stairs Mrs. Reed heard the hall door shut and the visitor was gone when she reached the top. Once more, a few days before Mrs. Palliser left town, Colonel des Voeux again presented himself with the same modest request, Would Mrs. Palliser see him? Mrs. Palliser did, and the visit was a long one.

On confiding this curious story to Mr. Reed, he strictly enjoined silence respecting it upon his *fiancée*.

"It's no affair of yours, and if something ugly does turn up, why, it won't be to your credit to have lived three or four years with a lady that has been found out."

"He was that particular, was Mr. Reed," concluded the widow, with a sigh. "I never saw the French maid she engaged to travel with her," she resumed, after putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "and I *did* want to see her. All I ever heard about her was that her name was Adèle. Mrs. Palliser just mentioned it when asking whereabouts she should find some of her things, 'for,' says she, 'I fancy Adèle is more of a courier than a lady's maid.'"

That was all she had to tell when a terrible death had closed her unfortunate lady's career; silence as to this mysterious visitor was more incumbent than ever, and so the story lay half forgotten in her mind.

But she had said enough.

When her communication, which had been carefully taken down, was given to the chief detective employed by Messrs. Godfrey, he studied the details in silence and then observed he would take it away with him to compare with some notes he had at home.

The result of his reflections and comparisons was that he remembered the name of des Voeux as being the real appellation of a man with several aliases, who had been "wanted" in London and Paris some six or seven years ago, for extensive and clever swindling, but who had escaped in spite of the most carefully laid traps.

He disappeared just at the time of Mrs. Palliser's death, and with him a French girl called Adèle, who was the *chère amie* of an American who worked with des Voeux. The latter was from the Southern States —a very distinguished looking handsome man, who had been received into fairly respectable society and had the manners of a gentleman.

Given this clew the indefatigable detective collected bit by bit the following narrative:

When Isabel Palliser *née* Wesselitzka, daughter of a Polish father and an English mother, found her husband was determined never to hold any further communication with her after he became acquainted with the details of her past, and that the continuance of her comfortable income depended on her conduct, she determined to do nothing to forfeit it, and for some time kept her resolution well, partly strengthened to this end by the knowledge that she was extracting a good sum yearly from Palliser's pockets.

But an irreproachable life grew intolerably wearisome. Better half a loaf of solid luxuries than no bread, no light, love, color, movement. She was almost dying of inanition for the lack of the special pabulum her nature needed, when she suddenly encountered Pierre des Voeux, an old lover whom she had been desperately fond of once. He was flush of cash, and she was inclined to throw everything to the winds for his sake, but he reminded her that she would have to live when this fit was over.

They therefore concocted the following scheme:

Mrs. Palliser had been speaking and thinking of a visit to the southeast of France in company with an old acquaintance who, through a life of varied vicissitudes, had managed to preserve a wonderfully decent reputation—Mme. Holderberg. This lady had known des Voeux in former times also, though now she was careful to see very little of him. She was a sympathetic woman; moreover her sympathy could be raised to melting point by the application of sundry metallic morsels to the palm of her hand. The judicious use of these morsels in sufficient quantity (merely in payment of traveling expenses) induced Mme. Holderberg to accept a substitute for her dear friend in the shape of Mlle. Adèle, an interesting acquaintance of des Voeux', who had sufficient likeness to Isabel, Mrs. Palliser, for temporary personation.

She was the same height, she had abundant black hair, flashing dark eyes, a good carriage, a graceful walk, and spoke English well, with a distinctly foreign accent. She, for a consideration also, agreed to travel to Southampton (chosen because Mme. Holderberg

was at Havre, and that line was less used by persons likely to recognize the colonel and his intended companion), go to an hotel as Mrs. Palliser, wait for a maid, whom she expected next morning, and when she did not come start for Havre without her. Meantime Mrs. Palliser and her representative met at Waterloo, and having tipped the guard largely, to secure a first-class carriage to themselves, changed clothes *en route*, Mrs. Palliser even intrusting her attendant with the ordinary ornaments—the watch, etc.—she usually wore.

At Southampton the fascinating colonel met his fair friend, where they parted company with Adèle.

His intention was to make for Bordeaux, and cross into Spain, where after a month or more of enjoyment his charming traveling companion was to join Mme. Holderberg in Paris, and return with her to London, much refreshed by her trip, while des Voeux was to go on in peace and safety to Yankee-Doodle land.

A carelessly thrown and still burning match, a neighboring petroleum lamp in a room beneath the unfortunate Adèle's bedroom, defeated all this neat, compactly planned scheme.

The striker of the match, a slightly inebriated traveler, had left the room, closing the door behind him, and the fire had got hold of the curtains, the ceiling, the floor above, before the alarm was raised, and the author of the mischief escaped. When Colonel des Voeux and his companion heard of the catastrophe next morning they were aghast. Whatever was the result, Isabel's career as Mrs. Palliser was at an end.

By a bribe or two des Voeux managed to gain admittance to view the supposed body of Mrs. Palliser.

"The face is awfully disfigured," he said when he returned to his accomplice. "No one could tell who it was, but the figure is like, the watch and things are preserved, and some of the rings are still on the right hand. Ten to one she'll be buried as Mrs. Palliser. As to tracing Adèle, I don't suppose there's a soul to ask after her. Her 'pals' in London think she's gone to America with me, and the sooner we are off the better. The Hamburg steamer to New Orleans touches here this evening. Let's sail by her. You can never reappear, never account for yourself. I'll stick by you. We may make a pile together, or if we fail we may clear out together. Let's have a good time while we can. By and by that fool Palliser will marry; then, when his son and heir is a couple of years old, he'll stand a round sum or a big salary to prevent his being publicly bastardized."

So the colonel and his companion vanished into obscurity. We will not say they "lived happy ever after," but much less unhappily than many better principled people do. Not that bad principles tend to happiness, but though our friends were a brace of scoundrels they had the power of loving each other, although their general benevolence was scanty; nor were they false to those with whom they worked, though the work was evil.

After some years of what seemed a pleasantly exciting life to Isabel, her beloved companion was shot in a street row.

She mourned for him with passionate grief. Then,

finding her fortunes at a low ebb, she started for Europe, intending to extract the means of living comfortably from her unfortunate husband.

She had carefully read the English papers, and thus arrived at the certainty that Palliser was the happy father of a son and heir, whom *she* considered a pledge to secure her fortune.

The discovery that her victim was childless turned her flank; yet she was not at first hopeless of gaining some profit from his difficulties. She certainly never calculated on finding his wife with him when she made her entrance, but at the sight of the fair, refined, and somewhat stately English style of Janet's beauty, she jumped at the conclusion that she would have her full share of the horror of "the shocking" which is especially English, and that she would probably persuade Palliser to yield to the demands of an adventuress rather than risk the scandal and exposure of an open trial.

In this she reckoned without that "host" which is so potent a factor in all calculations.

Such was the story told to the patient and penetrating judge of the Divorce Court, substantiated by curiously unexpected bits of evidence, and finally the confession of the unhappy woman whose wrong-doing wrought all this woe.

Fortunately social London was at this early winter time dispersed abroad and given to the moors, the preserves, the hunting field, and there was, therefore, less attention concentrated on the Palliser divorce case than would have been the case a few months later or earlier.

At last it was all over. Amid the silence of a profoundly interested and crowded court the judge pronounced "a decree *nisi*," to take effect that day six months.

Palliser was comparatively a free man, but he was considerably exhausted by the anxiety, and deeply mortified by the exposure of the past six months.

For the moment he did not feel as if he cared whether he were set free or not. All he wanted was quiet and obscurity. He had returned to town to be at hand when the painful matter was decided, and he now forced himself with some difficulty to venture to his club and to his usual haunts. He was surprised and cheered to find how warmly he was welcomed back by those in town, how evidently everyone was on his side, and he began to believe that after all he was not so much the worse of this bad passage save in pocket.

By his orders Captain Rowley had been kept informed from headquarters, *i. e.*, Messrs. Godfrey's office, of the daily progress of the suit. Now, at last, he was able to write to Janet that he would be with her as soon as he possibly could, when they could congratulate each other on the end of their time of trial, and make plans for future and happier days.

CHAPTER XVII.

BREAKING AWAY.

DURING the whole of this distressing time Janet had hardly left the house.

It had been a trial long drawn out indeed, and the strain had told upon her severely.

In the early autumn during the season—for Beachurst had its season—Captain Rowley had insisted on taking his daughter away to a quiet little village in Cornwall, letting his pretty villa to a London visitor meantime. The change had refreshed and strengthened Janet, but the intense anxiety of the concluding chapter undid much of this good effect.

Various matters of business occurred to detain Palliser in town, and though he resolutely kept silence as regarded the real cause of his disturbance, Captain Rowley grew fidgety and irritable because his son-in-law did not show more eagerness to return to his wife—his sorely tried wife. A dim sense of coming trouble clouded the old man's outlook. Janet was so white, so quiet, so uncomplaining, his formless fear that she did not altogether enjoy the prospect of returning to her husband began to take shape and consistency—and she was so silent too.

At last—it was but three days' delay—came a

telegram. Palliser intended to arrive the following evening.

From the moment she read the announcement, Janet was devoured by a nervous dread which permitted her no rest. How would Palliser look and act? Would the tone of his voice be hard or sympathetic? She knew his every gesture, and tone, and aspect so profoundly that she needed no words to explain his mood.

The captain strove to be joyous, and fussed about dinner and a curry, while Janet gathered what chrysanthemums or "last roses of summer" she could find, and made things look pretty with trembling fingers.

The chill, misty November day closed in even earlier than it ought, and the lamps were lit when Palliser drove up.

"You'll find me in my den, dear, when you want me," said Captain Rowley, in an unsteady voice.

"No, no, do not leave me, father," whispered Janet, clasping his arm; "stay—do stay."

"Palliser will not thank me."

"Yes, he will. Think how awkward——"

Before she could finish the sentence Palliser entered. He looked grave, worn, thin, but smiled with something of his old kind expression.

"My dear Janet!" he exclaimed, taking her hands, and drawing her to him, kissing her tenderly on the lips and cheek. "What an awful time we have had. It has told on you as well as on myself!" looking at her searchingly with his keen dark eyes, as if noting every change—and they were many. The rounded

graceful outline of her figure had shrunk to the thinness of an unformed girl, her eyes seemed larger; her mouth, no longer firm and smiling, had an infinitely pathetic expression. She held Palliser's hand closely, but could not command her voice.

"And you, my dear Captain Rowley, you look the best of us. Very glad to see you again," said Palliser, turning to him, and they shook hands cordially enough.

"I needn't say how welcome you are," said the old man huskily. "The last few weeks have tried this poor child woefully."

"Thank Heaven they are over," said Palliser, with a sigh. "We must try to forget them as quickly as possible, and build up our lives again on the best pattern. Eh, Janet?" Captain Rowley murmured something about looking after his son-in-law's baggage and hastily left the room.

"Sit down—you can hardly stand!" said Palliser, putting his arm round Janet, and drawing her to the sofa. She was trembling from head to foot. It seemed awful to her being thus alone with—not her husband—he was quite gentle, but by no means enraptured at this meeting after seven or eight months' separation.

"I did not think you would be so overpowered at seeing me again;" and he stroked the hand he held, looking curiously at her; "you had become such a very composed young person before we parted."

"I am weak and foolish," she said with one of the sweet, thoughtful smiles he once loved to watch, "but it has been a sore time of trouble. I have thought

much of you, and felt deeply—most deeply—for you, Randal. It seems so hard when those who are blameless suffer."

"I deserved purgatory for my contemptible idiocy, my madness, and I certainly have had my deserts. Now, my dear Janet, let us begin again. Let us forget this tragic interlude, and make others forget it. May will be here before we can be remarried. How strange it sounds! Then we must keep open house for a while. I must say you are a good hostess—so——"

"Ah, Randal, do not let us speak of the future, till—till—to-morrow. I, too, have some plans to suggest—and you will listen with patience—you *must*," impressively.

"Of course I will," returned Palliser lightly. "And now, my dear Janet, however profound our emotions, one must dress for dinner."

"Certainly!" said Janet, with a faint smile, as she rose to ring for the servant to show him his room. "You will not find very luxurious accommodations, but——"

"You don't suppose I am such a cad as to want finery," he interrupted, and left the room.

Janet stood just where she was, quite still. How nice Randal was, how good-looking and well bred! He was trying hard to be all he ought to be, but how impossible for him to disguise his indifference.

As she thought her nerves ceased to quiver, her pulses to throb, light was coming to her. What a cold gray light, still far preferable to the clouds and thick darkness which had hitherto enwrapped her.

The entrance of her father broke the current of her thoughts.

"Well, my dear!" he exclaimed, "your husband is all right, at least as regards you. He is awfully cut up, poor fellow! What a time you both have had. I trust in God there are good days in store for you, and I am sure there are. After this trial all will go well and smoothly, and my troubles will end with yours. How long will Palliser stay? It must not be long, you know."

"No. I suppose not," said Janet dreamily. "We will not discuss plans till to-morrow—at least I could not, I know."

The kindly old sailor did his best to make the dinner a little feast of joyous reunion, and Palliser made much conversation, but on comparatively abstract subjects. He told several incidents of the trial with point and effect, and gave various items of news respecting mutual friends; but an odd sense of awkwardness—of something yet to come—underlay his efforts to be agreeable, and even Captain Rowley, one of the most unsuspicious men breathing, was half conscious of a certain degree of chilly apprehension—apprehension of he knew not what.

Janet was very silent, but when her father proposed Palliser's and her own health and happiness in a little speech, which ended in an almost tearful "God bless you both," she stretched out her hand to Palliser, and said in a low tone, "May you have many happy, peaceful years."

Palliser kissed the hand extended to him, with much politeness.

Soon after dinner, Janet, excusing herself on the plea of fatigue and headache, went away to her room.

Palliser, having held the door open for her, returned to his chair and, after a moment's silence, remarked thoughtfully:

"I fear that Janet is a good deal shaken by this deplorable business; I fear her health is not what it used to be."

"She is a bit shaken," returned Captain Rowley, "but as to health—bless your soul, she's as sound as a bell."

Palliser did not reply, and presently began to propound his own ideas as to arrangements for the next six months; part of the time he proposed to spend abroad and part in London. He did not care to take up his abode at Mervyn till he could return there with Janet. But the conversation languished, and after observing that he could decide nothing until he had discussed matters with his wife, "as of course I consider her," he said, he put an end to it by wishing his host good-night.

Somehow the meeting had been a little disappointing to the loving father. Things much anticipated generally are.

The next day was less gloomy, but blustering with fierce dashes of rain and gleams of sunshine between. Captain Rowley declared that it was blowing half a gale from the west-nor'-west, which was about the only wind that ruffled the bay.

Palliser had had some letters to write immediately after breakfast, and Janet had placed the writing materials on a table, while Captain Rowley departed on his nearly diurnal walk to the club.

Janet brought some fanciful stitchery and sat down by the fire From time to time Palliser glanced at her, marking her extreme pallor, and perceiving that the hands which held her work trembled.

Presently, he affixed stamps to his letters, and rising came over to the fireplace.

"Now, Janet," he said, "I want you to tell me your ideas and wishes as to the future. I can make no plans until I know them."

"Thank you, Randal, my idea is very simple." She paused, and rather nervously folded up her work, and put it into its bag, then she clasped her hands together round one knee, and keeping her eyes downcast, "I scarcely know how to speak it."

"You used not to be afraid of me, Janet!" in his sweetest tones.

"Ah, yes! I was," she exclaimed, the color rising in her pale cheeks, while her voice grew steadier. "Now I must nerve myself to say it at once. Randal, I do not want to go back to you; I do not want to be your wife any more!"

Palliser looked at her with wide-opened eyes, then a slight smile came to his lips, and he said with a tinge of contempt, "What is the real object of this mad speech?"

"What it expresses—I do not wish to be your wife again."

"I am afraid the long nervous strain has been too much for you. Has it induced softening of the brain?" he said coldly.

"Rather hardening of the heart, in the sense of strengthening it," returned Janet steadily; for, hav-

ing made a beginning, she felt her courage rise. "Do not think I am speaking from some weak or passionate impulse; I have thought of this for months."

"Who is my rival?" exclaimed Palliser fiercely. "What fresh humiliation have you planned for me? Is this the return for the tenderness, the luxury I have heaped upon you?"

"You have no rival, Randal, and you know it; and God knows I do not want to injure you; I shall injure myself much more. But you have ceased to love me, and I have failed to fulfill your dearest wish—I am an unprofitable servant. My own affection is frozen out. Why, for want of a little courage, should we either of us go back into bondage? Why try to mend up our 'broken links'?"

She was quite herself now, and conveyed a sudden impression of resolute purpose which astonished Palliser.

"You are mad—decidedly mad," he exclaimed, pacing the room after the fashion of perplexed men. "If you persist in this unpardonable folly, people will say that I have treated you brutally, in spite of my seeming a gentleman. I shall not be left a shred of character."

"I shall always speak well of you, Randal. You were never brutal—you could not be brutal; you ceased to love me. Why, you could not tell yourself probably. *My* love died harder, because of its own nature I suppose, and therefore gave me more pain—so much pain, that if—if you could have understood—you might have been more merciful, you see. No grandeur nor success nor wealth could make up for

the want of what perhaps you could not give—but that is all over now. My love is quite dead too, and I will *never* be your wife again."

"By Heaven, Janet, I cannot fathom your motive! You have a motive, I am sure."

"Yes, a strong one. I want to secure peace and self-respect. In your house I could have neither."

"And what can you do? Settle down into poverty and obscurity?"

"Yes, I shall return to the place from whence I came."

"But don't you, as a religious woman, feel yourself bound by those solemn words, 'Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'"

"Which of your wives did God especially join you to, Randal?" she asked, a sad smile passing over her lips. "Would the sanctity of our vows have saved me harmless, had I remained with you when that wretched woman reappeared? Accident has played havoc with the holiness of the tie which bound us."

"Your selfishness will ruin me," exclaimed Palliser, pausing in his troubled walk; "men will shun me, aye and women too, when they reckon up all you renounce rather than return to me."

"No, Randal, no. Before a year is over you will be accepted as kindly as ever in society, and fair women will be as ready to marry you—for you have everything—wealth, station, reputation, looks, charm—ah, *how* much charm I once knew well." She raised her eyes to his with something of the old tenderness in their quiet depths.

A curious thrill ran through his veins.

"Janet, you have been foolishly exacting. A man cannot always be a lover, even to so sweet a woman as you are. Can you believe that I am indifferent to you, dearest," drawing a chair beside her, and taking her hand, "if you look into my eyes?"

Janet smiled and interrupted him.

"No, I do not believe, Randal—I know it, I cannot blame you—I suppose it is involuntary—only, of all the various manifestations I have experienced from you, none have ever estranged me so much as your passing fits of caressing fondness, which to-morrow turned to dust and ashes! I have no enmity to you, Randal. How could you give me what you did not possess? But it would be madness to lose this chance of freedom. I for one am determined to grasp it, and so give *you* the emancipation you will not seek."

"I will plead no more!" exclaimed Palliser, rising and deeply offended. "I suppose you have taken into consideration the effect this disastrous decision will have on your father?"

"I have," she returned mournfully. "It will upset him dreadfully, I fear, but—on my head be it."

"Very well," said Palliser sternly. "I shall give you a week to consider the matter; at the end of that time should you continue in the same mind—we part forever."

"In a week," said Janet steadily, "I will in any case write to you."

"Under the circumstances, you cannot be surprised if I leave at once."

"Certainly not," returned Janet. "It is quite natural."

"Then I wish you good-morning," he said stiffly.

"We do not part enemies!" she exclaimed starting up and coming toward him.

"Perhaps—certainly not friends," he returned. "I do not deserve such treatment from you." She stood back, her hands clasped and dropped before her; she was profoundly moved. The past with all the sweetness and enchantment of first love, the unstinted belief in endless confidence, in "the long sunny lapse of a summer's daylight," glowing with tenderness and affection, came back to her, melting her heart with its memory of intoxicating happiness. What would she not have given to be able to trust Randal, and believe in him, as she once did! During their painful colloquy, her heart went out to him with unspeakable longing, but the memory of the many occasions on which she had yielded to the passionate desire to trust in his apparently renewed affection, only to experience the bitter tonic of disenchantment, came to steady her judgment; and now she was alone, and though the tears she could not repress welled up thick and fast, and choking sobs heaved her bosom, she thanked God she had had the courage to keep her purpose unshaken. One more trial remained—the impending explanation with her father.

He would be sorely distressed at first; but she would tell him all—all she had endured—the pain—the humiliation. He had guessed something, she was sure of that, and he was always more or less in sympathy with her; still the quarter of an hour's explanation before her was a very bad one.

While she pondered these things, Palliser suddenly re-entered. He was dressed in outdoor garb.

"I leave by the next train," he said. "I prefer *not* to meet Captain Rowley. I consider that you are treating him cruelly. You may, therefore, manage to communicate your decision to him yourself. I wish to repeat that I will give you a week before you finally decide. Up to the 1st of December I shall be in Eaton Square; after, my whereabouts will not concern you unless you recall me."

Janet bowed. "Very well," she said. "I shall write to you. Good-by, Randal."

He made her a low bow, and left the room with a stately air.

The next minute the sound of wheels moving swiftly away told Janet that the husband she had once so fondly loved had passed away out of her life.

Then came a space of formless void, of dark nothingness, as if passing from one state of existence to another. Presently she heard footsteps and voices, and saw her father standing before her.

"How's this, Janet?" he said. "I hear that Palliser has gone back to town. Had he a telegram?"

"No, my dear father, no. I—I have refused to be his wife again."

"His wife—refused to be his wife; I don't seem to understand," said the old man, with a dazed look.

"Do not be angry with me, dear father. I am so grieved and vexed to disappoint you, but I cannot go back to Randal Palliser," said Janet, and her voice showed her mouth was dry with agitation.

"You must have very grave reasons for entertaining so extraordinary an intention. What are they?" asked Captain Rowley, with a sudden dignity, as if the depths of his nature had been touched. Janet could not speak, and he continued, still standing before her. "I have sometimes feared that you were not quite as happy as I could have wished, but I never would ask a question: silence is the best mode of healing wounds when a woman is married; but, child, think of all you forego—think of the injury to yourself. I —I cannot believe you are serious; you've had some tiff with Palliser, and fancy yourself implacable."

"I wish we had had tiffs!" exclaimed Janet. "If we had quarreled and made it up again, we might have loved each other fondly through it all. It was the deadly quiet of Siberian coldness that killed all tenderness, all affection. Ah! believe me, I have suffered."

She paused abruptly.

"Have you any reason to think that he was unfaithful to you?" asked Captain Rowley sternly.

"No, such an idea never occurred to me. When we had been a year married I saw a change in him; indeed, I had begun to fear it before. Then—then Richard Palliser's son was born—and I had no children. I saw this was an unpardonable failure. I tried —oh, so hard!—to win him back, to touch him, till I hated myself for my fruitless slavishness. Then I let my own love go, but I hated my position; it humiliated me to be at the head of *his* house—to wear the costly clothes *he* paid for—to be decked in *his* jewels —all part of the bargain, in which I had failed to per-

form my share. No—no words can describe the torture of those years, while Randal grew more and more icy. I know he looked on me as a useless encumbrance. So long as I was linked to him irretrievably, I was determined to keep a fair face to the world. Had this bondage continued for some years longer, I should probably have grown harder and accustomed to it; but now, when I am still warm with life, vibrating with pain in every nerve—could I resist seizing this blessed chance?"

Captain Rowley subsided into a large chair, with a sort of moan.

"But, Janet," he said, "after all, you have no ill treatment to complain of. You had everything you wanted, everything suitable to your position, and—and —you confess you had no reason to doubt his fidelity."

"I might have *known* he was faithless, yet forgiven and loved him still, if he had returned to me after wandering from the straight road, but without a counter-attraction he simply wearied of me; and would willingly have broken away from me. Believe me, I am doing Randal a service——"

"My child," he interrupted, "think of the motives that will be attributed to you; everyone will believe that you have a lover in the background, and think of the reports that will be spread abroad of Palliser's villainy."

"The first year will be bad," said Janet steadily, "but we shall both live it down. Before twelve months are over Randal will have found another wife. Then, if she gives him a son, he will bless me. Oh, father, dear father," throwing her arms round him, "do not grudge me the first gleam of hope I have had

all these dreary years. Do not turn me from the only real home I have ever known. Let me have the happiness of being with you, of caring for you. No doubt about my rights in your house! Let me have peace, my dear father," and she burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

The old man was quite overcome. He held her to his heart and uttered confused sentences. "It's an awful business; I never heard of anything like it. Send you away, my precious pet? Not likely, when you are the light of my eyes! You know you are just setting law and religion at defiance! *You*, a well brought up girl! I am sure I had no notion that Palliser was a cold-blooded rascal of that sort! Good Heavens! that he should have made you miserable. Don't cry like that, dear. You shall do just as you like, only I will not hear of you deciding all of a sudden. Take time, my pet!"

"I have taken time, dearest dad! I have been studying the question for six months. I never *will* return to the man who was my husband. I shall make my existence somehow, even if *you* turn me out. If you let me stay I will not cost you much."

"Cost *me* much, my child? You are worth your weight in gold to me, and I am better off than I used to be. These years, while I had only my own old self to pay for, I saved up a bit and invested a trifle—Tom managed that for me. Oh, what *will* Mrs. Tom say?"

"It does not matter much, dear; we'll go away somewhere together, and after a while I shall forget I was ever married—ever anything but Janet Rowley, daughter of the dearest old salt in the service."

Seven days after they had parted Palliser received the following by the first post:

"DEAR RANDAL: I write as I promised, to say that I am still in the same mind. We shall probably never meet again—at least I hope not, for I could never see you without emotion. I do not blame you for ceasing to love me. I suppose you could not help it. I only pity myself because I have lost both your love and my own. I hope and believe you will yet thank me for the step I am taking. Still faithfully yours,

"JANET ROWLEY."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

A SOFT spring morning of alternate sunshine and gray shadow as the fleecy clouds swept over the wide stretch of sky and sea, was smiling over the quaint little Norman village of St. Valery-sur-mer, which looked out from the coast of La Manche toward the Channel Islands—a handful of fishermen's houses nestling beneath two high cliffs which seemed to have been rent in twain to make room for them, and a small stream which drained the high ground further inland. A narrow road led steeply up to where the little valley effaced itself by reaching the upper level of the land. This sheltered ravine favored the growth of some pines and beeches, which could not exist on the summit of the wind-swept heights, that here presented their iron barrier against the waves, and their shade and foliage gave an unusual charm to the place, as Norman villages on the coast are generally bleak and bare. A little back from the village stood one or two more pretentious abodes built of huge gray stones, with rough massive wooden stairs outside and porches of the same material, both covered with abundant clematis, its tangles of small dark green leaves and starry white blossom giving an air of youth to the rugged walls. It was a nook which had escaped the Cook's tourist and

even the less stereotyped pedestrian student intent on a "cheap outing" and a spell of contemplative pastime with the rod.

Here Captain Rowley and Janet found themselves about eighteen months after the latter had broken the links which had bound her to her husband; and she began to feel she had gone through the worst of her trials.

The first months were hard.

The horror and astonishment of her friends, the remonstrances of the very few who were entitled "for the old sake's sake" to address her on the subject, the cruel hints and suggestions in the society papers, (though of those she saw very few), all were more or less painful, especially as they pained her father.

Perhaps the most trying of all was the dismay of her friend Mrs. Bent. Herself supremely happy as a wife and mother, she felt, as most people do who are happy in those relations, that marriage was such a sacred tie that scarcely any misconduct, any misery entitled the sufferer to cut the knot. Moreover, Palliser had never been guilty of any misconduct, and probably, had she returned to him, would have learned to love her dearly again. On these points Janet soon ceased to argue; she knew how vain was the attempt to convey her impressions to another.

The dear old vicar and his wife wrote in sorrowful disapproval, not doubting that serious causes existed for the extraordinary step which Janet had taken, yet reminding her that she was bound to forgive even to seventy times seven.

All this, and the gossip which she felt rather than

knew was floating in the air, made Beachurst intolerable both to father and daughter; and Janet having taken a cold, which her depression, mental and physical, made it difficult to throw off, Captain Rowley sought and found a tenant for his pretty villa, and after some indecision fixed on Jersey for a temporary residence, both for economy and because an old naval acquaintance with a widowed daughter and grandchildren was settled there, and could give them a little society.

Previous to their leaving Beachurst Palliser had shown his acquiescence in Janet's decision by sending her everything that could possibly be considered hers, and Janet was surprised how much she had left behind. For this purpose he had employed Mrs. Raynes, who had been charged with the conveyance of the whole to Beachurst. The cold, grave woman was much affected by the sight of her young mistress, and evidently thought she had purchased peace and liberty dearly. She again begged to be taken into her service, adding that she would much rather be happy than have high wages.

Janet explained kindly and clearly that it was impossible, as her father's household would probably consist of only one servant altogether. At this appalling statement Mrs. Raynes burst into tears—but departed.

It was some consolation to Captain Rowley that neither Lady Saville nor Lord and Lady Darrell withdrew their friendship from his daughter. That these, Palliser's nearest relatives and connections, did not break with her was strong evidence in her favor,

and he read the following letters with reviving hope and satisfaction:

"(*Private.*)

"PARIS, December 10.

"MY DEAR JANET: I have never been so stunned by anything as by the extraordinary story Randal has just told me. I hesitate whether to think you quite mad or quite right. You must be prepared to have the most cruel and probably unjust suspicions heaped upon you, and to have your life and doings scrutinized in the most unfavorable spirit, at any rate for nine days.

"I could understand your conduct better if Captain Rowley were as rich as I am sure he deserves to be, but I fear you have committed yourself to a *triste* existence, and though you are amazingly good, I don't suppose you will mourn all the days of your life because you made a false start. Why could you not make up your mind to rejoin your husband? He hadn't a pleasant temper, but he gave you large compensations. You would, as you grew older, have been a social leader; and you had such a charming house. Now, though Randal *is* my brother, and has been very generous to me, I know he *can* be horrid; once you cease to amuse him, or gratify him, or to be necessary, you cease to exist for him. But there are many men like that, and some women. I remember thinking, when I was last at Mervyn, that you were going through the preliminary stage of agony, but you would have got used to it in time, and hardened into a very comfortable condition. However, it is all over

now. Randal is in a white fury. I never saw a man so mad with mortification. You have certainly paid him out. Of course he took off the mask before me; still, he is not mean. I asked him if he wished me to break with you. He said, no. I was to do as I liked, only I must never mention your name before him. That is only natural, so I am not going to break with you, dear. I was always fond of you—you are the only really good woman I ever met who was not tiresome. The people who have had our place are going away, and when we return you must come and stay with me. My boy, Alexander, has been here to bid us good-by; he is on his way to India. *He* says if *he* were uncle Palliser he would go on his knees at your feet and never get up till you promised to come back to him. There is one champion for you! Sir Frederic has had a bad attack of bronchitis—you cannot think what a tiresome invalid he has been; poor fellow, I am often very sorry for him. Finally, knowing what you are by nature, I am inclined to think, after all, that you are right.

"Always affectionately yours,

"GERTRUDE SAVILLE."

"I am afraid," said Captain Rowley, very gravely, as he took off his pince-nez, "I am afraid this lady has not much principle; she treats a very serious matter very flippantly."

"She is very kind and sympathetic, but it is her style. She doesn't mean half she says," returned Janet.

"Anyhow, she means all this," tapping the letter with his glasses.

"She means to be very kind, dad."

The other epistle was dated from Rome.

"My Dear Young Friend:

"I must call you thus until I know how you wish to be addressed. I have rarely been so disturbed as by this disastrous split between you and Mr. Palliser. *Why* did you not seek the intervention of friends before it was too late? You have placed yourself in a cruelly false and difficult position, in which the least indiscretion may be ruinous."

The writer proceeded to enlarge on the error of judgment committed by her young friend, and the insurmountable barrier she had placed between her husband and herself.

"I confess [continued the writer] I perceived that you were not as happy as your friends might have wished, even in the early days when first I had the pleasure of knowing you. But patience and forbearance overcome enormous difficulties. I believe that your trials were considerable; still Mr. Palliser was not a bad husband as husbands go. It is too late, however, to retrieve what has been done. Though greatly distressed at what has occurred, I hope to renew my acquaintance—I will say friendship—with you when I return to England. Pray keep me informed of your whereabouts. When we meet I have no doubt you will tell me more than you care to put on paper.

"In the meantime, although I am sorry for Mr. Palliser, who will be credited with considerably worse

conduct than in all probability he was ever guilty of, I am your sincere friend,

"M. DARREL."

This Captain Rowley declared to be the letter of a prudent, far-seeing woman. Nevertheless, though possessing the courage of her opinions, Janet was sometimes afflicted with thrills of doubt. Had she been hasty? might she have done better for Randal than she had done? No; the more she contemplated the attitude in which they stood to each other, the more convinced she was that their only chance of happiness lay in the disruption of their bonds; at all events, it was too late to think of any other line of conduct, and, in spite of her narrower, duller life, she felt infinitely more at rest, and made herself more essential than ever to her father.

The winter immediately following her final break with Palliser was *triste*, especially from its monotony; in the spring she made some interesting French acquaintances, whose society greatly enlivened her. It was from them that she heard of St. Valery as a pleasant, picturesque retreat from the summer heat, and at a very easy distance. This therefore was their second visit.

The time was now drawing near when Captain Rowley's house would be again on his hands, and they had decided to return to Beachurst, and settle down to a quiet life in that pleasant abode.

Time, as Janet urged, would soon smooth down the ruggedness of the beginning, and friends would gather round them.

She had had but a couple of letters from Lady Saville since that above quoted, but this caused no surprise to Janet, for soon after Christmas Sir Frederic had succumbed to a sudden attack of illness brought on by a severe chill. Lady Saville, who had been overwhelmed with grief for the loss of a husband with whom of late years she had been on anything but friendly terms, was greatly occupied, but Janet never doubted her kindly feelings and sincere interest in herself.

During this long digression Janet and her father had been rambling along the top of the cliffs, their usual resort on a calm day, talking of future plans and probabilities and discussing the intended migration of Tom and his family to a larger and grander house.

"He has got on wonderfully, and considering the terrible disappointment I have been to both, especially to Mrs. Tom, they have not behaved badly. I am not inclined to quarrel with people who think I have done wrong. None can know the truth in a case like mine. How well and stoutly you are walking, dear dad!"

"Aye. I feel a new man this spring. I was terribly creaky all last year, though I didn't like to say much about it. Now I feel more like what I used to be at Navarino Cottage. Aye, that was a sweet spot. I was cut up at leaving it. But as things have turned out, it is as well I did! Ah, my pet!" He paused, for he saw that his daughter's eyes were fixed on a graceful looking schooner-rigged vessel with snowy canvas, which was standing across the wide bay, striving to catch every breath of wind.

"That's no fishing boat," exclaimed Rowley. "It's a dainty pleasure craft, and English, but it's not the

season for yachting, and this is not the sort of place they make for. She's well handled. Well, once she gets in behind the north headland she'll not stir an inch further, it is a dead calm."

After watching the schooner for a few minutes Captain Rowley and his daughter continued their walk till they reached a spot where the path bifurcated, one track leading down an abrupt hollow, and finally joining the road to the village where a small chapel had stood for centuries—in this hollow violets abounded and other spring flowers also grew thickly. Janet soon gathered a large posy, so that the time passed swiftly and they arrived at home somewhat past the breakfast hour, for which the landlady—a well-mannered, rather dignified personage, who did what small services they required—scolded them; she did not like such indifference and injustice to her cooking.

They had placed themselves at table and begun their repast when Mme. la Propriétaire said, "A gentleman was inquiring for monsieur and madame just before they returned."

"A gentleman?" echoed Captain Rowley, greatly surprised. "What sort of a gentleman?"

"Oh, English without doubt; very red, and dressed like a sailor *en grande tenue*. He spoke French well enough. He is coming back in an hour, when he thinks monsieur and madame will have finished *déjeuner*."

"Did he not leave his name?" asked Janet.

"His name! Well, yes! but *ces diables de noms Anglais*—how was she to remember it!"

"It must be someone from that English yacht,"

exclaimed Janet. "But who? I feel quite excited! I wish—I hope none of the old set will find me out; I don't want to see any of them."

"How could anyone find out we are here? I suppose we will soon know. A little more fricandeau, my dear? You are not eating anything."

The breakfast or luncheon had hardly been cleared away, and Janet finished filling a pretty old china bowl with her flowers, when Captain Rowley, who had drawn a chair to the window to pore over the *Times*, looked up at the sound of footsteps in the garden below, and exclaimed:

"By George, it is Darrell! Hallo, Darrell! delighted to see you come along."

A heavy step came swiftly up the stairs, and Darrell, broader and redder than ever, crossed the threshold with outstretched hand.

"This is a pleasant surprise," continued Captain Rowley. "How the deuce did you find us out?" Meantime Lord Darrell was greeting Janet, who felt desperately inclined to run away, with great cordiality. "I thought I was never to see you again; my mother thought you might be back at Beachurst, but there they said you were in Jersey, so I took a cruise across to St. Helier, from Southampton, and there they directed me to St. Valery—pretty, old-world little place. Charmed to see you looking so well, Mrs.——" He paused in some embarrassment.

"Miss Rowley," said Janet steadily, though the color flamed in her cheeks and her eyes sunk.

"Ah, yes, of course. My mother will be so pleased to hear of you. She is not as good a correspondent as

she used to be, but you are a prime favorite with her."

They sat down, Captain Rowley immediately offering his visitor a cigar case. He himself smoked a pipe.

"And Lady Saville? I have heard nothing from her for a long time," said Janet.

"She is a good deal shaken. We were all rather surprised at her grief about my uncle. They avoided each other as much as possible of late years, and now she is inconsolable."

"Death obliterates so much," said Janet thoughtfully.

"And what's the Admiralty going to do about that iron monster, the *Hecla?* She won't steer a bit—compasses all out of gear."

"I'm afraid, though I play at being a sailor, I am not up in such matters."

Conversation rippled on in the old gossipy grooves, and Janet felt transported back to bygone days, yet was not sorry to find herself in the present.

She fancied from time to time that Darrell was watching her covertly, so she felt bound to show as brave and bright a front as she could.

Finally, Darrell carried off father and daughter to dine with him on board his yacht; explaining carefully that he was quite alone, and that the yacht was not the same as the one in which Janet had made the famous cruise to the coast of Scotland while yet the glowing light of early love made life a glimpse of heaven.

It was a pleasant finish to a pleasant day, and the row back by moonlight was delicious.

The next day, and the next, and many others passed in genial companionship, boating or rambling among the cliffs.

The old frank familiar tone re-established itself between Lord Darrell and Janet. Often their talk skirted very close on subjects which each felt forbidden, and from which each sheered away by unspoken consent.

"So you are thinking of going back to Beachurst, soon?" said Darrell, one lovely afternoon when he had strolled with Janet to meet Captain Rowley on his return from Constance, whither he had gone to make some necessary purchases, in the early ramshackle omnibus which plied there on market days, and returned in time for dinner.

"Yes," returned Janet, "we must be there in about a fortnight."

"You had better take passage in my yacht."

"Thank you; we must first return to Jersey."

"Well, so you can. Then we'll run across Channel to Kingsport."

"Let us discuss it with my father."

"Very well," looking at his watch, "he will not be here for an hour, or, considering the rate of locomotion in these parts, two. Let us turn on to this bit of common and rest on some of the stones up there; we'll have a pretty peep of the sea, and down the valley."

Janet assented.

"I have been watching for a chance of speaking to you," began Darrell, with something of constraint in his voice, while he gathered some long, sun-dried grasses which grew near, and twisted them together?"

"I hope you have nothing disagreeable to say?" she returned, a little uneasy.

"It may, or may not, be disagreeable. Do you never see any paper but the *Times?*"

"Never, except an occasional French paper."

"Then you know nothing of what is going on socially?"

"I suppose I do not."

Darrell beat the ground softly with his stick for a few seconds in silence.

"It is rather awkward to begin. Have you not heard a whisper that Palliser was going to be married?" looking keenly at her.

"Not a syllable," she returned, not quite so steadily as usual, "but I have always expected to hear it."

"It has been all done very quickly, but he is to be married to-day—indeed by this time probably *is* married to Lady Eveline Danby—Lord Glentanner's youngest daughter."

There was a moment's silence. Then Janet said calmly and softly, "I trust he may be happy. I hope he will allow himself to be made happy." Another short pause. "I don't think I have ever seen the young lady," she added.

"Very likely not. She only came out last year. A pretty dolly pink-and-white creature."

"I have met her sisters," said Janet, and relapsed into silence.

"You are a deucedly plucky woman," exclaimed Darrell, looking at her with evident sympathy, "and —what an ass Palliser has been!"

"That remains to be proved, Lord Darrell. We must suppose he knows what he wants."

"Tell me," he resumed, "are you really going to settle down in that dull hole, Beachurst?"

"I do not see what else I can do. At the same time I shall not be unhappy there. I have what I have not known for years—a real home with my father."

Lord Darrell gave a sort of groan.

"I have an alternative to suggest," he said, very gravely but composedly.

"What is it?"

"That, *faute de mieux*, you marry me!"

"This is a bad jest, Lord Darrell," said Janet severely.

"It is most sober earnest! I have been thinking of it, and screwing up my courage to ask you, ever since I heard of Palliser's engagement."

"I do not think it is good taste on your part to ask me, Lord Darrell! Can you not understand that, although it seems quite natural that Mr. Palliser should take another wife, I do not feel as if I were unmarried?"

"That is unworthy of your common sense."

"There are some feelings too strong for common sense."

"Then you don't think my proposition worth considering?"

"That is not the way to put it. For the present I feel it would be indecent to think of marriage, and I do not think I could ever believe that any man would love me lastingly. Mr. Palliser seemed almost too fond of me at first, yet it all faded away. No, I believe I shall always shrink from the idea of love or lovers."

"Just remember what a long spell of life lies before you, and although such a fine old fellow as your father ought to see his hundredth year, the probabilities are he will not, and when he is gone—well, you'll be lonely. Besides, I am not going to worry you with love-making! I took the disorder early and got over the worst of it. But couldn't a couple of sensible people get on very well with friendship for a matrimonial basis? I want your company on life's journey, for you are the best comrade I ever had. I wish you would think of it. I don't want you to fall in love with me—just take me as an honest sort of chum, and let us enjoy life together."

"What a characteristic proposal, Lord Darrell," said Janet, smiling. "But I have still the same answer. I will not again fetter myself; the burnt child dreads the fire."

"I am sorry I cannot get you to see things from my point of view," said Darrell calmly. "I rather think we should get on very well. I hope I have not annoyed you. Now, suppose you keep this little passage of arms dark? I mean from Captain Rowley—it will prevent worries. You and I, of course, are much too practical to run away from each other because one of us wished to join forces. I want to be on the same pleasant friendly terms with you as formerly. I have been too abrupt, but I promise not to trouble you on the same subject for at least a year."

"I shall always be glad to be your friend, but you will see there can be no use in renewing——"

"Time will show," interrupted Darrell. "But I am not such a heathen as to believe that life is over for a

creature like you, because you made one failure and had the courage to extricate yourself. No, my dear friend, compensation waits you somewhere, and whether I am instrumental in it or not, 'may I be there to see.' Come! shall we move on and catch the *diligence* higher up?"

Another month saw Janet and her father settled in their modest home, and beginning life afresh. Already their story was fading from men's minds, and women's too, while Janet was thankful to feel the routine of their peaceful life soothing and healing her wounded spirit into health and strength.

Shall Lord Darrell's prophecy meet fulfillment, and joy bloom once more for her saddened spirit? Who can tell?

THE END.